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MICHEL DE GHELDERODE'S SHORT ONE-ACT PLAYS

City University of New York

PH.D.

1980

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MICHEL DE GHELDERODE'S SHORT ONE-ACT PLAYS

by

DAVID WILLINGER

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

Chapter

I. STRUCTURAL FEATURES 6

 The Unities

 Late Point of Attack

 Framing

 Entrance and Exit Patterns

 Character

 Language and Sound

 Setting and Atmosphere

 Conclusions

II. SOURCES, INFLUENCES, AND ANALOGUES 78

 Puppet Plays

 Mime

 Clowns and the Circus

 Fairy Tale

 Pastoral

 The Medieval Mystery Play

 Agon

 Maeterlinck

 Dada and Surrealism

 Conclusions

III. THREE COMPARISONS BETWEEN SHORT PLAYS AND LONGER ONES . . . 131

Transfiguration in the Circus and Pantagleize

Dreams Drowning and Christopher Columbus

Piet Bouteille and Miss Jairus

APPENDIXES 146

 Appendix A: Fourteen Heretofore Untranslated Short One-Act Plays

Blockheads

The Massacre of the Innocents

Venus

The Public Life of Pantagleize

Transfiguration in the Circus

Dreams Drowning

Caroline's Household

The Liar's Club
Duvelor
Rainbow
Hamlet's Grief
Adrian and Jusemina
Ostend Maskers
The Magpie on the Gibbet

Appendix B: Chronology of the Short One-Act Plays

Appendix C: Charts of Entrance and Exit Patterns

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 360

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INTRODUCTION

This study seeks answers to two questions: (1) Whether Michel de Ghelderode's short one-act plays constitute an autonomous grouping. (2) Whether they are integral with the body of his longer works. In grappling with these questions this dissertation attempts to elucidate the organic nature of these one-act plays, that is, the adjustments in dramatic structure which the plays' brevity brings about.

Three primary methods will be used and a chapter given to each of them: (1) Close analysis of the plays' dramatic shape, their means of characterization, language, and setting. (2) Examining the plays' sources, influences, and analogues. (3) Comparing three of Ghelderode's longer works with three of his shorter ones.

The plays I chose for inclusion conform with Percival Wilde's observation that one-act plays run for no more than approximately forty minutes. I ruled not only Ghelderode's three, four, and five-act plays out of this study, but such works as Hop Signor, Lord Halewyn, Chronicles of Hell, and La Farce de la mort qui faillit trépasser, which comprise a separate grouping of long one-acts, each of which would constitute an evening of theatre on its own. Also excluded from this study are such unpublished short one-act plays as La Mort regarde à la fenêtre (1917), Le Miracle dans le fauborg (1924), and Atlantique (1950), which are unavailable for examination.

The plays in the remaining group number twenty-five, the total number of Ghelderode's published plays being forty-four, with two major

works, Images de la vie de Saint-François d'Assise (1926) and Le Siège d'Ostende (1933) still unpublished. The group under study contains the majority of Ghelderode's published plays (see Appendix B). All quotations from these plays, whether texts or titles, will be referred to in English rather than French. Only three of these plays remain untranslated, Le Mystère de la Passion de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, La Tentation de Saint-Antoine, and La Grande Tentation de Saint-Antoine, all of which are written in the manner of Massacre of the Innocents. For the rest, they have been translated either by Lionel Abel, Samuel Draper, George Hauger, or myself. Those plays which I translated were undertaken especially for this study and appear in it (see Appendix A).

Percival Wilde has asserted that the one-act form demands insight, power, and brevity of its practitioners.¹ In a remark typical of Ghelderode's detractors, Roland Beyen bemoans Ghelderode's, "propension à la prolixité et au verbiage," in the longer works, an apparent incompatibility with effective craftsmanship in the one-act form.² A playwright known neither for brevity nor restraint,³ Ghelderode does achieve both these qualities in his generally disregarded one-act plays through a multiplicity of means. By setting the plays in conventional

¹Percival Wilde, The Craftsmanship of the One-Act Play (New York: Crown, 1951), p. 38.

²Roland Beyen, Ghelderode (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1974), p. 98.

³David Grossvogel, Twentieth Century French Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 304, for instance, speaks of his tendency to excess, and Auréliu Weiss, Le Monde Théâtral de Michel de Ghelderode (Paris: Librairie 73, 1966), pp. 17-18, speaks of his excess and verbosity.

theatrical modes, through careful patterning of entrances and exits, by concentrating the action of certain plays on a single incident, through innovative and/or special language these plays achieve an organic unity unusual in his better-known longer works.

Marie Collins, for one, has noted that the five one-acters she considered are more satisfying theatrically than the six longer dramas on the same subject which she was studying. "They condense in a 'reserrement vertigineux' Ghelderode's tendency to be prolix into one hour instead of three,"¹ a contention maintained by other critics, such as Aurélien Weiss and André Vandegans.²

By and large, though, Ghelderode's short one-act plays have either been ignored, treated cursorily, or sometimes derided by his critics, George Wellwarth sounding a familiar note:

Michel de Ghelderode has written several other short plays but none of them contains any significant additions to the main themes of his work. Ghelderode remains primarily the dramatist of his own personally created world of medieval Flanders. . . .³

The notable exception to the general neglect these plays have received is Escurial, a favorite for many.⁴ The "medieval" one-acters,

¹Weiss, p. 18, quoted in Marie M. Collins, "The 'Dance Macabre' in the One-Act Flemish Plays of Michel de Ghelderode" (New York University, 1969), p. 12.

²Weiss, pp. 17-18, 84; André Vandegans, "Aspects d'Escurial," Marginales (May, 1967), p. 73.

³George Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest: Developments in the Avant-Garde Drama (New York: New York University Press, 1967), p. 113.

⁴For detailed discussions of Escurial see: Weiss, p. 95; Collins, p. 56; Beyan, pp. 35-39; Vandegans, "Aspects d'Escurial;" "Les Sources plastiques d'Escurial," Revue d'Histoire du théâtre (1967); "Escurial et Hop-Frog," Revue des langues vivants (1968); "Reflecta hugoliens dans Escurial," Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France (March-April,

The Old Men, The Strange Rider, Piet Bouteille, The Blind Men, and Magpie on the Gibbet, have also received some serious study, particularly from Marie Collins and Roland Beyen.¹ Three Actors and Their Drama has been discussed most often when remarking on its resemblance to Pirandello's theatre. Ghelderode's denial that he had been familiar with Pirandello's work prior to writing this play has been a source for controversy and the main basis for discussion of this play, its other interesting qualities having been largely ignored.²

The treatments of the remainder of these plays hardly constitute exhaustive studies: most often they are plot summaries or brief allusions, while five of the one-acts have been mentioned once, and in the case of Hamlet's Grief, not at all.³

1969); Jean Francis, L'Eternel aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode: Spectographie d'un Auteur (Brussels: L. Musin, 1968), p. 361; Helen Hellman, "The Fool-Hero of Michel de Ghelderode." Drama Survey (1965); Leonard Cabell Pronko, Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theatre in France (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 167, 175; and for a divergent, less enthusiastic point of view, see Wellwarth, p. 109, who considered Escorial, "one of [Ghelderode's] weakest works."

¹ Collins, passim; and Beyen, pp. 11-16.

² See: Roland Beyen, "Les goûts littéraires de Michel de Ghelderode," Les Lettres romanes (1970), pp. 57-60; Elisabeth Bogaert, "Le masque dans le théâtre de Michel de Ghelderode," Romanica Gandensia (XII, 1969), pp. 120-122; Jean Francis, Michel de Ghelderode, Dramaturge des pays de par-deça, p. 113; Jacques Guicharnard, Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Beckett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 165.

³ I have discovered as few as two references to Duvalor: Francis, L'éternel aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode, p. 126; and David Grossvogel, p. 293. I have also found a mere two references to A Night of Pity: Bogaert, p. 123; and Pronko, p. 169. Elisabeth Deberdt-Malaquais, La Quête de l'identité dans le théâtre de Ghelderode (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1967) pp. 15, 76, 104-105, 120, mentions Blockheads, Venus, The Public Life of Pantagleize, and Dreams Drowning

This study will break new ground in that it is the first of its kind to examine these twenty-five plays as a group, and the first to give any serious consideration at all to certain of them, notably: Venus, Blockheads, Dreams Drowning, Transfiguration in the Circus, The Public Life of Pantagleize, Rainbow, and Hamlet's Grief. In doing so, it will frequently begin with comments by Ghelderode's critics, referring to his other plays. The work done by so many of these individuals has been invaluable, their interpretations often finding their most poignant examples in these plays, and the short one-acts being brightly illuminated by them.

Each of the short one-act plays of Michel de Ghelderode has a consciously imposed unity. We invariably feel the presence of a higher force manipulating the action. Some of these plays were written specifically for marionettes, but the puppet-puppeteer relationship infuses all the plays, even those written for human actors. In consequence of these plays' brevity, Ghelderode has telescoped subjects that frequently implicate the cosmos and moods that are anarchic into controlled, schematic structures. His short plays characteristically strike a balance between their subjects' great magnitude and chaotic nature and the diminution and strict order of their forms.

once each. Roland Beyen, Michel de Ghelderode ou la Hantise du Masque, Essai de Biographie critique (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1971), pp. 292, 310, mentions Rainbow twice. Hamlet's Grief is mentioned nowhere.

CHAPTER I

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

The Unities

With six exceptions, Ghelderode's twenty-five short one-act plays conform to the neo-classical unities of time, place, and action.¹ Ghelderode's recourse to the unities results in condensation of form and indicates dramaturgical restraint. Of the six exceptions to this practice, four are the Bible plays (Massacre of the Innocents, Le Mystère de la Passion de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, La Tentation de Saint-Antoine, and La Grande Tentation de Saint-Antoine), constructed in a cinematic style which, in its own way, telescopes time and jumps from place to place with dispatch. The other two exceptions, Dreams Drowning and Three Actors and Their Drama, violate the unities in that the first and last segment of both plays are laid in what purports to be an actual place, sandwiching middle segments set in virtual domains created by the imagination of a given character. The first and last scenes of Dreams Drowning take place on the pragmatic shore, while the central scene is an underwater fantasy issuing from the Diver's mind.

¹The short one-act plays are: Piet Bouteille, The Old Men, Blockheads, La Mystère de la Passion de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, La Tentation de Saint-Antoine, The Massacre of the Innocents, Venus, The Public Life of Pantagleize, Escurial, Transfiguration in the Circus, A Night of Pity, Dreams Drowning, Three Actors and their Drama, Caroline's Household, The Liar's Club, Duvelor, La Grande Tentation de Saint-Antoine, The Strange Rider, Rainbow, Hamlet's Grief, The Blind Men, The Women at the Tomb, Adrian and Jusemina, Ostend Maskers, and The Magpie on the Gibbet.

Three Actors and Their Drama begins and ends backstage of a theatre, while the middle segment is "onstage," a play-within-a-play. So, by varying the dimension of reality, Ghelderode violates the unities in these cases, without (as will be shown later) sacrificing structural tightness.

Late Point of Attack

Ghelderode's frequent recourse to the late point of attack condenses his plays even more. Many of them have an "endgame" quality and evoke a winding down of energy, a last gasp just before or as the action ceases.

Typically, Ghelderode set Blockheads immediately before the off-stage death of the "living God," presumably Jesus, which coincides perfectly with the Poet's onstage crisis. The imminence of Jesus' death has wound the Poet's nerves to the breaking point, the rapid, explosive unwinding of which the audience witnesses.

The last phase of Mary's pregnancy on through Jesus' birth limits the time of The Massacre of the Innocents, and excludes the many other episodes from the New Testament story. The Women at the Tomb is set after Jesus' crucifixion has transpired, the play displaying the leftover rivalries between the fourteen female adherents. The activities are consequently the passive, futile gestures of impotent people: bickering, blame-placing, and mourning. The one decision, to bury Jesus, precipitates the final mass exit, a negation.

Preludes to death other than Jesus' entail late points of attack in the Flemish plays, The Old Men, The Strange Rider, Piet Bouteille,

Escorial, and The Blind Men. In the latter play's story, the blind men have been aimlessly circling for seven weeks; the end of their circling is at hand. Virtually the entire play consists of Lamprido's reproof of the blind men's arrogance and his offer of safety followed by their refusal and instant death. Piet Bouteille depicts the title character's literal last gasp, beginning with his collapse as Piet enters and closing with his death soon after. The long history of his illness and intimated escapades antedates the action. Escorial is the final hour of a king's relationship with his wife, dying offstage, and with his Fool, whose death he is designing onstage. In The Strange Rider, too, the characters are expecting a visit from death. Before the Watchman finally reports that death took a child, sparing the aged inmates, there is only time enough for them to engage in the flurry of those who feel death's immediate approach. Likewise, the advanced years of the characters in The Old Men heighten the sense of things ending, the story in this case fixing on the urgent attempts of one character to get the ancients to participate in a ritual of old age, washing the feet of surrogate apostles on Holy Thursday.

The sense of a long preceding history and present senescence pervades most of these plays and goes hand in hand with the characters' old age, as with Sun and Rain who are depicted as senior citizens; their cosmic relationship and orgasm are the subjects of Rainbow. Preparing for and consummating their meeting is the play's action, one that has been repeated since the beginning of the universe. These giant, but declining, powers take part in this meteorological indulgence less and less often (but with no less fabulous results).

Just as the forces of the natural world run down, so does the underworld's agent, the devil. We discover this superannuated demon in Duvelor plotting his own end, the play taking us through his last capers, leading up to a semi-successful suicide attempt.

The extreme example of late point of attack amongst these plays, Hamlet's Grief, strikes a flaccid note, since the action consists of nothing but empty philosophizing and witticisms. In fact, the only tension is derived from the disparity between the audience's familiarity with the gravedigger scene from Hamlet and the violations of it unfolding before them in Ghelderode's bastardized version. No integral conflict, activity, and no planning of any are apparent in this post mortem interlude; there is no dynamic future.

These plays specialize in the lingering after-effects of life, rather than life in the making. The exposition of A Night of Pity clearly establishes a butt-end, left-over twilight; it is a limbo-land from which the life has been sucked out, death having yet to exhale its chill breath on the proceedings. Twilight gathers still further to encompass all Western culture in Venus and Dreams Drowning. Classicism and other vestiges of a fragmented civilization are presented as pieces of a puzzle which defy attempts at reordering. The characters in Venus try but fail to straddle the classical world, recently deceased, and the modern world of contingencies. The character, Venus, is attempting to revive the tradition of Venus de Milo's greatness by living out her own life without arms. She is simultaneously hazarding the modern practice of appearing onstage naked. Her swashbuckling paramour, de Romeo, makes vows typical of the heroes of antiquity but the up-to-date

diving outfit he has on prevents the fulfillment of his heroic intentions. Rather than one who embarks on innovative studies, the play's scientist, Curtius, is an archeologist obsessed with righting the errors of the past. And the old aristocracy, in the person of the White Russian, Aspirin, tries to accommodate to the new order by driving a cab with proletarian zeal, hampered only by the absence of any arms, the lack of which symbolizes the superfluity of the leisure class in the new utilitarian world. The Diver in Dreams Drowning finds the story of civilization being reenacted by mimes on the ocean's floor. The adventure of this spectacle contrasts sharply with the emptiness of modern existence, felt so keenly by the Dealer who sends him down.

On the microcosmic, personal level in Three Actors and Their Drama, Ghelderode once again chooses the terminal stage, rather than the entire progress, of the love triangle depicted. He parallels it with the failure of a playwright who is making a final attempt to gain recognition. Another amorous triangle, Pierrot, Harlequin, and Columbine, drag their now senile frames through Caroline's Household, seemingly so bereft and feeble that they wish they had seen their last dawn. Because they are fictional and immortal, however, a final curtain is denied them. So with the dawn they merely continue on, winding down more yet. The love-struck characters in Adrian and Jusemina have come to the end of their tethers, and are at the extremity both of infatuation and boredom when we meet them. Their machinations have a furtive, desperate quality, for this mood has prevailed long before the action begins. The emotional spring is wound tight, so when it looses, it and the action unwind with force and speed.

The Magpie on the Gibbet also has a late point of attack, starting just before the abortive hanging of the elusive Tyl Ulenspiegel, and The Liar's Club starts up on the eve of the club's final get-together. Similarly, the Verwin in Ostend Maskers has reached the point of no return from his carnival-time drinking bout, and is in fact ready to call it a night when we discover him. It is only his alcoholic delirium that returns him just enough energy to hallucinate the play's events.

The exceptions to this otherwise pervasive late point of attack are Transfiguration in the Circus (one of the longest of these plays) and The Public Life of Pantagleize, whose actions commence at some mid-point in their stories. The clowns have been working for the Manager long enough to be ready to revolt. So while a long history of exploitation ostensibly precedes the curtain's rise, the action itself takes us through the entire revolution, from starting shot to final debacle. Compression, here, comes not from a late point of attack, but by setting the revolution in the metaphorical world of the circus, which atomizes and mechanizes each stage of the struggle.

Although Pantagleize has presumably been defying society, living on the outskirts in his tube for some time (so once again there is a preceding story, albeit a vague one), the action begins when the opposition to his chosen existence first appears. The play takes us from that early point to the conflict's resolution, his exodus. Economy is preserved here by encapsulating the entire contest in three brief encounters.

Framing

It has been insistently asserted, often by Ghelderode himself, that

he writes the dramatic equivalent of paintings, those of Bosch, Breughel, and Ensor being his favorites. His subjects, characters, and flair with color on stage are attributed to his affinity with these paintings.¹ These short plays indicate that he also possessed a painter's feeling for composition. The relationship between the lengths, quantity, and juxtapositions of scenes achieve the equivalent of harmonious canvasses in a temporal medium.

One technique Ghelderode employs liberally to check his tendency to free-floating form is to "frame" many of these plays with some symmetrical action at the beginning and end. Whereas the frame is, of course, fixedly on view when looking at a painting, the frame of a play is perceived through the unfolding of time. Both frames are consistent with the essential nature of their art forms, a space medium and a time medium respectively.² Percival Wilde refers several times to the one-act playwright's obligation to work on a "smaller canvas," and mentions various examples of framing in the one-act plays he cites.³

The frames in Ghelderode consist of parallel tableaux or sounds, identical moods of locales, putting the same character alone onstage at the beginning and end, having the same character express comparable or

¹See: Beyen, Ghelderode, pp. 14, 15, 146, 150; Nadine Castro, "Contemporary Middle-Ages: The Theatre of Michel de Ghelderode" (City University of New York, 1976), p. 82; Deberdt-Malaquais, p. 73; Francis, L'Éternel Aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode, pp. 79, 112, 199, 277, 290-292; Grossvogel, pp. 268-270; Weiss, p. 90; Wellwarth, p. 101.

²James H. Clay and Daniel Krempel, The Theatrical Image (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 77.

³Wilde, p. 37.

otherwise related sentiments, or returning the play to an old order. One example of framing, implying circularity, is the tableau used in Hamlet's Grief, that of the Gravedigger tossing skulls out of the grave, onto the ground. This image reinforces the play's theme (or obsession) of death's ascendancy and inevitability. The Gravedigger tosses the skulls in a casual, though business-like way, establishing at the beginning and reinforcing at the end the flippant tone of the piece.

The simplest frame, a bare stage, greets the audience in Ostend Maskers and bids it farewell. It pictorializes the void the Vermin feels and the archetypal empty feeling the carnival leaves one with, once it has ended.

The howling of dogs at the beginning of Escorial, and the subject of the King's first line (he would kill the dogs to stop the noise), is the same cacophonous sound which resumes at the play's close. Dogs frequently are associated with the night, and Bettina Knapp elaborates on the notion that the dog is a traditional symbol of death, a fact Ghelderode either knew or sensed, since his use of the animal sound here is to herald death's approach and acknowledge its victory.¹

Characters whose single, though suggestive lines begin also end them with a simple allusion to the thought contained in the first line, a technique employed in both The Old Men and in The Strange Rider. Barbara, in the former play, opens it with the observation, "He's gone to sleep -- the one who was praying," a line containing practically the entire exposition. Pious vigilance here is the state impossible for the

¹Bettina Knapp, Maurice Maeterlinck (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), p. 57.

old men to maintain, but one that Barbara desperately exhorts them towards. Hers and the play's final line, "That's all that's necessary to know. They're saying it [the Lord's Prayer]. They're repeating it, and they don't understand," stresses the futility of her efforts to keep them awake to their holy obligations.

More allusive, yet structurally similar, is the frame in The Strange Rider. "I hear bells. They are the truth," the Watchman prophetically intones. The bells, another harbinger of death ("But whose?" is the play's issue) start the play, and the Watchman's final line ends the suspense his first line introduced by concluding that, "A new born baby!" was death's victim. This line is followed by the raucous din of an accordion mixed with the old men yelling, the celebratory response to the solemn bells at the beginning. The bells and the Watchmen suggested that death could be riding to claim any one of the old men. The sound of their relief has a grotesque flavor, promising but a short deferral of the old men's own death. In both these plays the framing has a responsorial character, reminiscent of a form of liturgical psalmody, which is also in keeping with the plays' spiritual tone and content.¹

Several plays leave the same character alone onstage at the beginning and end, in that way conveying the sense of a return, of a repeating archetypal cycle. The choric figure in Magpie on the Gibbet, the title character, is the first and last one we meet, the ironic, monosyllabic commentator on the action. Hanneke, the Magpie, is always

¹Glynne Wickam, The Medieval Theatre (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), p. 31.

onstage, so her final line, "It's too beautiful," is both a shock, being the first articulate, complete remark she's made, and a posterior frame, which ironically undermines the solemnity of the preceding action in a single line.

Bacchus and the Soldier begin the evening through which A Night of Pity spins, the Soldier, the passive listener, and Bacchus, the verbose master of ceremonies. With his final line, "My name is Bacchus," he falls asleep as dawn breaks, ending the night and echoing the refrain from his first speech, "It's me, Bacchus. . . ." These lines mark off the cyclic ritual, the death watch of which the play consists. Similarly alone again onstage in the end as she was at the beginning, Luna of The Liar's Club remains in her isolation. As with A Night of Pity, it is interrupted by a ritual, a convening of the club in this case, easing her loneliness for a while. As the curtain rises she is dusting, an evocative gesture which suggests not only her immediate aim to prepare the room for the meeting to come, but that of keeping her spirit and libido free from cobwebs. Her gesture at the end, picking up the money St. George leaves for her, resonates with the concessions that age exacts. She will resign herself to the cobwebs brought on by solitude, but settle for material rewards however ruefully they are earned.

Conversely, Eglon, on stage lamenting as Adrian and Jusemina's scalloped curtain goes up, is fulfilled by the time it falls, appreciative of his new-found purpose and accompanied by the unicorn's and peacock's stately dance. He, like Luna, was bored, aimless, and isolated, epitomizing the initial mood of all the play's inhabitants. By the end

he is a shepherd and a flutist, no longer alone, and brimming over with the harmony he and the others now feel. In this case, the "framing character" personifies the play's primary dynamic, from discord to euphony.

A variation on this technique is employed in The Public Life of Pantagleize. The first character to intrude on Pantagleize's (in this case) sought-after privacy, the City Guard, returns at the end. His return brings added pathos to Pantagleize's absence. We miss the reliability of his stubborn nonconformism, the skill with which he took on all comers, including the City Guard who now wraps up the action just as his first appearance helped unfold it.

The two figures who bring the action onstage in The Women at the Tomb, by their occupations, midwife and layer-out of the dead, frame life's journey itself. Their exposition reveals the blasphemous, debased reaction to Christ's sufferings, further elaborated on throughout the play. Two other characters, John and Mary, the last remaining at the end, are the solitary sincere mourners for His death and passion. They illustrate the alternative reaction of which humans are capable.

Ghelderode begins and ends The Women at the Tomb using two contrasting couples; he does something similar in Piet Bouteille, but with groups of three, the first one a debased trinity, the second beatific. The initial trio consists of Mille, the son, and Beloke, the mother, both hardened, earthbound, cynical peasants. The third is Madeleine, the blind girl whose sensitivity to the spiritual side of existence the others dismiss. Mille, in fact, throws a boot at her to stifle her moans of, "Piet!" which herald the death that is courting her grandfather

who has not yet entered. The play's final tableau, once Bonifacius, the crapulous priest, has fainted, consists of Piet, now dead true to Madeleine's prophecy, Madeleine herself, able to see (as though her vision had been the exchange for Piet's death), and Jef, the kind rag-picker, who closes Piet's eyes. The first frame is an image of the treatment the vulgate accords to the spiritually attuned, the second of the triumph of the spirit, a miracle.

The frames of Piet Bouteille suggest the movement from an old order to a more exalted one. The explicit purpose of the frames in Transfiguration in the Circus is to demonstrate the futility of embarking on a new order. The increasingly distraught circus Manager who opens the play is the representative of an old order crumbling. The clowns, as soon becomes apparent, will no longer work for the exploiting class of managers. The first big incident in the play is the expulsion of the Manager from the ring by Mister Clown and its occupation by the clown workers. A resumption of the old regime marks the end of the play as the Manager, more firmly established than ever, flanked now by Luna, the sexy equestrienne over whom the battle had raged, stands in the ring triumphant, as the clowns, now defunct, fly about above them in circus heaven. The two brief episodes clearly illustrate the shift from an old order to its reestablishment.

In Dreams Drowning and Three Actors and Their Drama the frames assume the proportions of prologue and epilogue, being complete though brief scenes which enclose longer scenes played, as mentioned above, in another dimension. In either case the first scene reveals one character pushing others into that different dimension. In the former

play the Dealer exhorts the Diver to bring gold back from the deep; in the latter, the Author sends the actors onstage to perform his play. In either case, the character who precipitates the middle scene (but does not participate in it), is like a dreamer whose agents are uncooperative or incompetent. So the first scene is an initiation of and preparation for the agents (the Diver and the actors), the central scene a vicarious enactment of the dream (the theatricalized underwater exploration and the play-within-the-play), and the last scene, death for the precipitating character (the Dealer and the Author). The dreams, which at first harbor the possibility of success, ultimately deliver nothing but disappointment and disaster to their progenitors.

There is yet another frame within that mentioned above in Dreams Drowning, which occurs in the underwater scene. The verbal and visual image of the "oceanic stage" being set and folded up again encloses this fantastic world.

Entrance and Exit Patterns

James H. Clay and Daniel Krempel suggest that, "Since artistic meaning is metaphorical, one key question becomes -- 'What is the play like?'" and elsewhere that, "The essential meaning of a play is expressed through its form."¹ A method for studying Ghelderode's short one-act plays emerges from fusing these two ideas. The entrance-exit patterns to be found in many of these plays act as armatures for the scenes they introduce, interrupt, and fortify. The regularity of these patterns and the repeated pure and variational use of a very few of them

¹Clay and Krempel, pp. 27, 50.

suggest that they may be one important key to understanding the plays' meanings and forms, and to how Ghelderode strove to achieve brevity in them.

One major entrance-exit pattern that may be dispensed with rapidly (to be examined more fully in the context of Symbolism) is that in which neither entrances nor exits occur at all, but in which both are expected. The Strange Rider, The Old Men, Hamlet's Grief, The Blind Men, and Blockheads are constructed as tableaux to which elements are neither added nor subtracted; the character(s) in each are constant from start to finish. These plays exemplify, then, a non-shifting pattern, one of intensifying stasis which organizes the above five plays.

To answer Clay and Krempel's question (now paraphrased), "What are these plays like?" two of the more dynamic entrance-exit patterns within them coincide remarkably with comic rhythms Henri Bergson observed and likened to the jack-in-the-box and the snow-ball.¹ Whereas he discussed these patterns as they structure short comic dramatic segments or lazzi, they are here applicable to the structuring of entire plays. An insight Bergson had, that the snow-ball effect is reversible and circular, is also true of several of the dramatic structures discussed below.²

The snow-ball pattern can be found in its pure state in Piet Bouteille, The Magpie on the Gibbet, The Liar's Club, and The Women at the Tomb. It consists of the gradual accretion of characters at more or

¹Henri Bergson, "Laughter," in Comedy, ed. Wylie Sypher (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1956), pp. 105, 112.

²Ibid., p. 114.

less even intervals until every character in the play is present at once, at which time the play's action peaks followed by their very rapid withdrawal, the order of exits, in one case, mirroring exactly the order in which the characters had entered.

The periodic addition of people to the stage may (to further address Clay's and Krempel's question) be compared to a painter adding elements to a canvas. The play's ephemerality is suggested in this metaphor, since as soon as its "canvas" is full the artist wipes it clean.

In Piet Bouteille the entrances accumulate, snow-ball style. The play starts with a sparsely populated stage; Mille, Beloke, and Madeleine are its inhabitants. Who will enter next is one of the first issues to concern them. The crux of the first segment is Piet's appearance.¹ The action before it was a building of suspense, moving the audience to wonder who or what Piet is. When he appears, it is evident that he is severely ill. The next entrance, Jef's, coincides with the next crux, since he brings a solution to Mille and Beloke's uncertainty concerning what to do about the sick man. Each peak of suspense resolves with a fresh entrance, bringing a further mounting of tension. The next entrance and the next crux are again contiguous. The group of worthy souls make their entrance in a staggered fashion, parts of the same body reuniting, the rings of a "Slinky" toy clustering.

¹Crux is explained as follows: ". . . dramatic tension cannot increase or decrease indefinitely. Within each segment there occurs some moment when the projects of the characters either shift direction, cease, or evolve into something new. That moment may be a highly concentrated point of time." Bernard Beckerman, Dynamics of Drama: Theory and Method of Analysis (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970), p. 114.

Up to this point, it should be remarked that the segments which the entrances have punctuated were approximately equal, though getting slightly shorter, their compression supporting the mounting intensity. The image (and in one respect, the play is like a bas relief being chiseled out) is completed when the curate enters. The only motion now is a penetration into the past. This scene, the plateau before the play's denouement, is the longest in the play, in which the submerged grudges and gossiped imputations against Piet's character threaten to be exposed. Piet's precipitate death and the restoration of Madeleine's sight, both blows from on high, end the exposé prematurely, and stop the gossip and trivialities. In reaction, the last of the play's activities is a mass exit of all who had entered, save Jef who is alone on stage with Piet and Madeleine, the pious trinity previously mentioned.

The slow gathering of people, each new character bringing an intensification of energy, constitutes the bulk of the play. Their disappearance, with about thirty seconds of the play remaining, leaves the impression of a catastrophe. Madeleine, the character who neither enters nor leaves, is the personification of the Holy Spirit which infuses the play. She starts as an oppressed child, the recipient of Mille's blows and insults, but ultimately prevails over the forces of darkness in this little "dramatic moment," as Ghelderode calls it.

The Magpie on the Gibbet is also paradigmatic of the snow-ball pattern. It starts with the magpie, Hanneke, alone onstage, joined immediately by Mankabena, the witch. They are then joined by Lamprido. She departs, leaving Lamprido alone with Hanneke. His departure is followed by the peasants' entrance, his return, their departure, and

a short scene between Lamprido and Hanneke. These seven rapidly executed French scenes include no important action, though they do set forth what little exposition is necessary. First of all, they establish the frivolous social and dramatic context within which the attempted hanging of the wrong man, the misunderstanding which crests the action, can plausibly occur. Dancing, drinking, carousing, urinating, sleeping, singing, and kidding around are the predominating activities these scenes contain. So, using quite compressed time segments, Ghelderode, through the multitude of entrances and exits, has established the sense of holiday and carefree coming and going. The two scenes between Lamprido and the Magpie are very short in real time, but their superfluity (insofar as they contribute to impelling the action) furthers the sense of carelessness in the world of the play. In short, Ghelderode is giving the impression that the action is slack, and that it is being tightened at a snail's pace.

The unceremonious entrances of the court officials and clergy further tighten the action, but retard it as well, since genial chit-chat divides the entrances of the various groupings. The action threatens to stop entirely as the officials of the court lie down for a nap, when the hangman rushes in, not with his prisoner, but chasing a maybug. We approach the dénouement, which we take to be the hanging of Tyl Ulenspiegel, but small disturbances postpone it even further. Each time the elastic tightens just a bit more. It is at its most extreme extension (the prisoner has died by natural causes) when the Guard from the Steenport enters with the news that they were about to hang the wrong man. His entrance is the final tug, after which release and

decrease occur.

The officials who had entered so sporadically and lethargically now beat a hasty retreat in a clump, as had the characters in Piet Bouteille. It is now as though we were going back through the preceding action in reverse, but in double-time. The void left by the crowd is filled by Mankabena for a brief speech, the peasants for what seems to be a split second, and the play's last word goes to the magpie who started the whole affair. The retrogression of the elastic action has no scenes of lingering dalliance, no superfluous chit-chat, just the backfire issuing from the play's practically simultaneous twin reversals.

The Liar's Club is also built with near-perfect symmetry, as is revealed by its entrance-exit pattern. Once again, the characters are brought on slowly and leave rapidly, but (with the exception of Ben Samuel) they leave in the opposite order to that in which they arrived. Ben Samuel (to reintroduce the painting analogy) acts as turpentine would on their mendacious pigmentation; the others cannot long endure his presence. Or, in the play's terms, the embarrassing truths he possesses about their lives chase the members of the Liar's Club from Luna's establishment.

John, the last to enter, is the first to leave, followed by Thomass, and then Sir Edward. St. George engages in battle with Ben Samuel, the Jewish dragon, who is vanquished and leaves. St. George himself, the first to have entered, now makes his departure, an unhappy one for Luna whose solitude is more pronounced now than it was at the curtain's rise, stripped as she is of her false respectability. And

the stage feels emptier than it did at the beginning, since it is now contrasted with the crowd that had, but a moment before, filled it.

The other play which follows this pattern exactly, is The Women at the Tomb. Its characters, some seeking refuge, some wandering aimlessly, some looking for news, find their way one by one into Judas' house. When twelve of them have accumulated (they are a negative image of the twelve apostles, as are the title characters in The Old Men), and the tableau is complete, they leave on masse. Ghelderode deliberately crowds the canvas, so that when the twelve have finally gone, the remaining two as well as the audience feel Jesus' absence all the more keenly, the same technique which suggests Luna's sense of loss at the end of The Liar's Club.

In all four of these plays, the entrances occur with even regularity, as though marking off time, and the exits with great rapidity, as though telescoping it. In all four entrances accumulate to expose images of a corrupt world.¹ And the puppeteer-playwright need only let the strings arbitrarily fall to bring about an ending like that which befell Sodom and Gomorrah. The characters are dropped in the trap or lifted into the flies leaving behind a single ironic remark (The Magpie on the Gibbet), a deservedly lonely woman (The Liar's Club), or a residuum of saintly figures (Piet Bouteille and The Women at the Tomb).

The third pattern, the jack-in-the-box, is best represented by Ostend Maskers, The Public Life of Pantagleize, Duvelor, and Dreams

¹Beyen, Ghelderode, p. 120.

Drowning. There is a central figure in each of these plays who collects and releases characters or character groupings. They do not adhere to each other, growing like a rolling snow-ball, as in the other pattern. Rather, each character appears, interacts with the nexus-character who remains onstage throughout, and disappears once again. This pattern creates different effects in each of the plays, depending upon whether the central figure is an agent, deliberately attracting and manipulating others, or a patient, passively receiving and reacting to them. This pattern is also like a musical composition in which a simple theme is introduced, joined by successive variations, and reduced finally to that first one.

The Vermin of Ostend Maskers rushes into his home, a refuge from the feverish carnival which proceeds without. Then, like a magnet, he draws various of the carnival's participants into his haven, although the room may also be considered his mind and the celebrants his visions. The Nymph of the Fountains enters just after he commences his first sleep or stupor, appearing in a puff of smoke.

The entrance-exit pattern, in this case, reinforces the feeling that the Vermin is the dreamer of the action, that it emanates from his head; the author then leaves him onstage alone between each visitation. These interludes with the Vermin by himself are important, for they allow him a respite between bouts, and introduce a moment of relaxation in the play's rhythm, preliminary to the next intrusion from the street.

The characters appear in various ways, each one a surprise. The first visitor, the Nymph of the Fountains, is obviously a product of his

dream, preceded by his lying down and snoring, accompanied by "langorous music" and "luminous mist." The next entrance, by the Three Harridans, seemingly unrequested, intercepts one of the Vermin's determined efforts to rejoin the carnival. Though he did not overtly summon them as he did the Nymph of the Fountains, they conveniently relieve him of the obligation to confront external reality on the street and lead him back to his self-created domain of fantasy. The explosive quality of their appearance and disappearance creates a decidedly different energy from the Nymph's dreamy dissolves. The entrance of Death and the Devil has quite a coincidental flavor, since they show up during his suicide attempts. The rhythm this time is suspenseful (as opposed to ethereal or abrupt), since the audience sees them before the Vermin does.

In addition to the Nymph of the Fountains, the Three Harridans, and Death and the Devil who alternately tempt and torment the beleaguered Vermin, there are minor invasions by the Ensorian masks, undeniably nightmare creatures, who pop their head in the door or window to jeer, pelt him with debris, or merely to look on. They make four appearances, three of which mark off the first segment, the last of which precedes (and connects with, by association) the entrance of Death.

In The Public Life of Pantagleize, the title figure takes no part in eliciting the visits he receives; his every effort is to get rid of these odious representatives of the government. As in Ostend Maskers, the visitors arrive singly and in groups. In contrast to the varied styles of entrances in that play, the secondary characters in The Public Life of Pantagleize uniformly appear with the air of predators stalking

an innocent, weaker beast. They invariably see him before he sees them and choose their opportunity carefully. The penultimate visitation is the most elaborate, leading to the crest of the action: The Three Politicians engage in a ritual awakening of Pantagleize, of a grotesque and cacophonous order; they beat insistently on pot lids.

The last entrance, by Aunt Jujube, in which she surprises Pantagleize (he is never surprised) in his cylindrical domicile is like the last entrance in Ostend Maskers wherein the hero is discovered by his visitors blindfolded; both delay the meeting slightly and create some tension.

In this play, although the auxiliary characters are uninvited and unwelcome, their focus and the play's is on the unruffled, omnipresent figure of Pantagleize. His centrality is further heightened by his interludes alone onstage, taken up with short pataphysical ditties and a single Jarryesque soliloquy. These interludes mark the action, suspend further incident (as Pantagleize would prefer), and give the feeling of extension, of time passing, brief though they may be in actual time.

Duvelor, a button of a play, feels protracted thanks to this pattern. Characters pop in and out on Duvelor with the mechanical quality and frequency of a demented jack-in-the-box. He sometimes feels driven to shut the lid of the mechanism by annihilating the poppers-up in the cellar, to insure that they will not reappear. These murders are increasingly brutal and outlandish, accelerating the energy.

The number of entrances is greater in Duvelor (twelve in all) than in any of the aforementioned plays which share the jack-in-the-box pattern. It takes on a frenetic, farce quality, precisely because it is

very short, while its incidents are plentiful and relentless. There is an intensification of the entrances, in that the visitors are increasingly distinguished and/or important to Duvelor. A large group, the flock of monks, is the last to enter, the stage being at its most crowded for the denouement as it is in Ostend Maskers and The Public Life of Pantagleize.

The play's furious pace is augmented by the ever lessening time Duvelor spends onstage by himself. The first such interlude consists of a rather lengthy speech, and they get successively shorter until they are one or two sentences long, and give the effect of a machine gone haywire.

In Drowned Dreams, the diver is the constant figure onstage and like the Vermin, is the dreamer of the piece, though activated by the Dealer. Under the sea the Octopus treats him to the spectacle of the mimes' performances. This pattern, while identical to the others discussed in respect to regularity and speed, even to giving the last grouping (the Aviator, the Sailor, and the Actress) the longest tenure onstage with the most complicated interactions, leaves the action remote from the Diver. Except for the visions' cumulative effect on him, the individual mimes have no direct contact with him and seem oblivious to the Diver's presence. It is as though the ritual would go on without him, and indeed it has. The abrupt introductions and equally sharp withdrawals of the various mimes accentuate the arbitrary, alogical rhythm of the dream.

Piet Bouteille, The Magpie on the Gibbet, The Liar's Club, The Women at the Tomb, Dreams Drowning, The Public Life of Pantagleize, and

Duvelor, are the purest examples of the snowball and jack-in-the-box patterns. Ghelderode does, though, wring variations from these patterns, sometimes altering a particular feature of them and sometimes combining them in different ways, so that different effects are produced.

In Venus there are rapidly appearing and disappearing characters, indicating the jack-in-the-box pattern, but more often than not, the stage is left inhabited only by the statue of Venus. This effigy, this "tomb of sculpture," an absurd scrap of Western culture, is the omnipresent figurehead in this play in lieu of a living being. She is joined and left repeatedly, unperturbedly epitomizing the amputation the twentieth century has suffered.

The pattern here is farcical, as is Duvelor's, but in this play there is a spasmodic though symmetrical rhythm to the entrances and exits. Venus soliloquizes, followed by a love scene with deRomeo; they leave. Kapman soliloquizes followed by a love scene with Venus; they leave: each action is mirrored. De Romeo, "surges from the left;" Aspirin, "surges from the right." Kapman appears carrying Venus' arms. Venus enters minus her arms. De Romeo carries Venus off and Kapman drags off Aspirin. This series is carried out with perfect, frantic symmetry. Then a rest comes, as the statue of Venus holds the stage for a moment. A new figure pops in from the ceiling, the deus ex machina, Curtius, science to the century's rescue.

After this jack-in-the-box action, the characters all snow-ball onto the stage, joining Curtius, finishing the picture, peaking the action, and then they leave. But the play does not end here. In Venus's unpredictable way the characters reconvene (like a broken

machine) to hear the news of her death as the women did in The Women at the Tomb. A group exodus follows as it did in that other play, leaving the statue of Venus tilting like the lone figure of Luna at the end of The Liar's Club.

The entrances in Venus all have an explosive force which, along with their frequency and close proximity to the other, give the sense of farce and anarchy, though it is evident that this complex little work is wrought in a highly conscious way, plotted mostly through symmetry.

The snow-ball pattern occurs four times in Transfiguration in the Circus, the clowns congregating and vanishing now gradually, now abruptly. The numerous comings and goings in this play heighten the sense of the folly and futility of the revolutionaries' activities. The last instance of snow-ball action occurs, of course, at the end, with the invasion of Luna, the Manager, and the newly arrived Clown Policemen exploding from Mister Clown's revolutionary bomb. And the aftermath of this catastrophe is a still more spectacular appearance in the vaulted ceiling of the clowns, trapeze-swinging in a blue light. Again, the feeling of reckless, disorganized abandon is created by careful, plotted, and evenly spaced arrivals and departures.

A Night of Pity begins with the jack-in-the-box pattern only to switch over to the snow-ball. Starting with the circular feeling of the merry-go-round outside, characters spin, one-by-one into Bacchus' tavern under his influence, and out again, leaving him alone. Once the principal characters (the Soldier, the Showman, the Woman) have each spun through once, like musical motifs being introduced, the other

pattern, a snow-ball, commences, culminating in the entrances of the heretofore un-introduced masks (supers like the masks in Ostend Maskers and the Policemen in Transfiguration in the Circus), followed by the usual rapid decrease, leaving Bacchus by himself. The entrances in the first half are laconic and dreamy, those in the second, intense and nightmarish. The cyclical earlier pattern brings nostalgia and wistfulness onstage, the second one arouses the energy like fever as a crowd is brought onstage, then dissipates after the play's longest, most crucial scene ends.

For the major part of Rainbow, the jack-in-the-box pattern is followed. Partibuze is the focal figure whom the other characters join and leave. He introduces the laws and personages of this ozone realm. As with the other examples of the jack-in-the-box pattern, individual characters join him and leave him alone again to discourse. Ghelderode thereby conjures up a leisurely, unincidental pace (with the seven colors, the large group, being the last to enter once again). The entrances are diverse in impact: Sun's entrance is given the biggest build-up, Petronelle's and John's are high-strung, and Rain's mellow and insidious. Once again, symmetry is the rule, the two pairs of lovers, Sun and Rain, Petronelle and Father John, refracting each other.

As in A Night of Pity, once each of the characters has been introduced, the pattern changes. The Angel falls asleep (which is a kind of exit, also used in A Night of Pity to cancel out the Soldier's presence), one couple, John and Petronelle, dashes on and off rapidly; the dramatic temperature suddenly rises. Rain and Sun sail towards each other in double-time (getting hotter), and the precipitous sexual

and dramatic climax constitutes a snow-balling rhythm which includes every character in the play, since Partibuze wakes up (in effect re-entering) and cranks out all the Colors. Again Ghelderode quickly accelerates a desultory pace by changing entrance-exit patterns and filling the stage with characters.

The variations on these patterns in Adrian and Jusemina are even more intricate, beginning in a mood of arcs and circles, based on the sundial from behind which the characters emerge (as the carousel in A Night of Pity had determined the spirals in that play). Eglon, like the Angel, starts in the central role, but abandons it for a tryst with the comet. For the time that he does maintain centrality, however, a miniature of the jack-in-the-box pattern goes by. The three non-human characters, Astonifantasius, Cornebelline, and Fluoresque, establish themselves by confronting Eglon, and recede back into the garden. By using this pattern here, Ghelderode conveniently evokes Eglon's isolation and the frustration all the characters feel at their inability to establish contact with each other, just as he had in Ostend Maskers. The amorous dance continues (without Eglon) as several characters come from behind the sundial in succession, just missing the others, to bemoan their sad states: the unicorn, the peacock, Adrian, Jusemina, Adrian again, and Jusemina again: another symmetrical series of entrances is used here as they were in Venus. By introducing the title characters last and by bringing each of them onstage twice by themselves, then both together for a confrontation, Ghelderode has guaranteed them their prominent place in the drama. The playwright achieves a subtle weaving (like the tapestry from which the play derives) by briefly re-

introducing characters, such as the couple: Eglon with Fluoresque and Astonifantasius with Cornebelline. Jusemina assumes the central position that Eglon had vacated; she is visited by Adrian, Astonifantasius, Cornebelline, and Adrian again. These increasingly brief scenes alternate with interludes in which Jusemina soliloquizes. The length of the last two scenes increases, allowing for a mellow, gentle decrease and resolution, since the frenzy had spent itself during the rapidly executed scenes.

So, in Adrian and Jusemina, Ghelderode makes judicious and selective use of the jack-in-the-box pattern when he wants to create a mood of alienation or a sense of action. By exchanging one character for another in a series of six solitary tableaux, he achieves a hide-and-go-seek playfulness, one of evasion and loss as well, but one with fulfillment at the end of the game.

Caroline's Household is the most complex play of those which incorporate both the jack-in-the-box and the snow-ball patterns. Borax looks as if he will be the focal character at the start, a suspicion bolstered by Joseph's rapid entrance and exit. But he soon feels driven from the spot, as the Manager in Transfiguration in the Circus is toppled from his perch of power, early on. Pamela drives the proceedings for a while, Spiridon and Suskanel's entrances and exits bounding off her stationary presence, indicative of the way she dominates them.

With Pamela's exit, the play switches over to the other pattern to bring the tension to a climax, a snow-ball roll which culminates when Borax attacks both trios of dummies with the balls. There is a

lull in energy for a bit once Pamela, Spiridon, and Suskanel exit, but it becomes more charged when the Policeman, the deus ex machina, descends. It is again true, as in many of these plays, that the tension reaches its highest pitch when the most characters are on stage.

A sense of loss and deflation occurs at the end of the play as the dejected trio, Pierrot, Harlequin, and Columbine, find themselves alone again (as characters do in so many of these works) and venture to trudge on, leaving the stage empty and the mood forlorn. Again, the entrance-exit patterning is one important example of the conscious crafting Ghelderode does in the short one-acts. He uses this dramatic element alternately to bring the action to a climax, speed it up, or wind it down.

Character

Three major categories of characters appear in Ghelderode's short one-act plays: 1) Those whose ubiquity within a given play unify and simplify the action, as is demanded by the one-act form. 2) Those particular to these plays in a way not tied to the requirements of the one-act form, but characters the like of which cannot be found elsewhere in the Ghelderode canon. 3) Those who are reminiscent of characters in Ghelderode's long one-act and multi-act plays.

There is in Ghelderode's plays, a character type who, as Elisabeth Deberdt-Malaquais has noticed, stands outside the action and comments on it.¹ Bettina Knapp, explicating a similar feature in Maurice Maeterlinck's The Interior, distinguishes between the

¹Deberdt-Malaquais, p. 120.

"narrational" and mimetic sides of the stage set.¹ The most pronounced instance of this division in Ghelderode's short works is found in Dreams Drowning, the set of which is overtly split. The Octopus, through his narration, makes intuitive, associative connections which integrate the otherwise random appearances of the mimes on the other side into a chronological progression. In a way, he acts as master of ceremonies for the submarine music hall, stringing acts together. Appearing in diverse disguises from play to play, this narrational functionary is both a descendant of the Greek chorus and of the gods who often introduce Greek tragedies.²

The stages of A Night of Pity, The Women at the Tomb, Adrian and Jusemina, Rainbow, Caroline's Household, and The Liar's Club are not artificially divided in this way, but there is a figure in each one who sometimes performs the narrational function, and at other times interacts with the purely "mimetic" characters. Percival Wilde, also referring to Maeterlinck's work, notes that, "Suspense here becomes what is exactly comparable to the organ point in music: a dominant sustained in the bass while other parts move independently."³ The narrational figure here is analogous to the "sustained bass," particularly useful as a familiar point of recognition when the work is extravagant and its tone bizarre.

Bacchus, Eglon, Angel Partibuze, and Borax respectively, are

¹Knapp, p. 83.

²Percival Wilde condones the use of a chorus in the one-act play to enhance unity; Wilde, p. 133.

³Ibid., p. 196.

like returning points in that they comment on what has already transpired or will transpire, introduce and explain characters and incidents, and explicate for the audience worlds that run according to a private logic. Each of these characters, to greater or lesser degree, participates in the mimetic side (Borax and Eglon abandon their narrational function rather early on and jump into the action), but all four introduce the strange laws which govern that character's particular sphere, like tour guides.

Luna in The Liar's Club plays hostess to the characters who come to her bar. Her concerns, including worry over the threat that Samuel's letter holds and over her potential for love going to waste, run beneath all the "independently moving parts," the gradual assemblage of the club members and their dispersal.

More overtly choric, like archetypal figures from the medieval theatre, the Layer-Out of the Dead and the Midwife, are present at every lull in The Women at the Tomb to lend the proceedings a metaphysical significance, and place the action in a context beyond the trivial bickering.¹ Since the charges that many of the other characters make are slanderous (and so, subject to question) and since some characters are inarticulate or need quick identification (for the sake of brevity and balance), these two spectres provide the necessary exposition.

Throughout his plays, Ghelderode introduces character groupings which function as single units,² but they fulfill a special purpose in

¹Some such symbolic characters from the medieval theatre include: The Divine Figure in The Mystery of Adam, Raise-Slander and Backbiter from The Trial of Joseph and Mary, and Death and the Doctor from Everyman.

²For example, Tallow and Wick in Hop Signor, the Three Mariekes in Miss Jairus, and the Six Military Judges in Pantagleize.

the short one-acts. As remarked earlier, Ghelderode has a propensity for emphasizing the climaxes of these plays by filling up the canvas that is his stage, so he introduces one of these clump characters which seems to spill out of nowhere and overwhelm the stage. The Worthy Souls in Piet Bouteille are used in this way. So are the Three Politicians in The Public Life of Pantagleize and the Three Shepherds in Massacre of the Innocents (who sometimes speak in unison), the Three Harridans in Ostend Maskers, the little Devils who run all over the stage in Duvelor, and the two different crowds of Keystone-like Cops, the one in Massacre of the Innocents, the other in Transfiguration in the Circus. The playwright-puppeteer, likened by Micheline Herz to God,¹ dumps the characters on the stage when he needs them, to give the sense of climax, catastrophe, and completion.

Two characters sometimes function as one as do Mary and Margaret in The Women at the Tomb. They enter together, like Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum, and are allotted a time segment as long as that of any other single character in the mathematically constructed play, which points up their oneness.

The static plays in which the tableaux never change, take advantage of the use of a scarcely differentiated mass of human beings, thus achieving a full canvas and suggesting a metaphor for all humanity. This option is employed in The Blind Men, The Old Men, and The Strange Rider.

In Transfiguration in the Circus Ghelderode's clowns sometimes

¹Micheline Herz, "Tragedy, Poetry, and the Burlesque in Michel de Ghelderode's Theatre," Yale French Studies (no. 29, 1962), p. 97.

work as a unit, but they have a measure of individuality as well. Mister Clown, who impels most of the action, is definitely the ringleader, both an organizer and a fanatic. August is a dissident and pragmatist, and Babylas provides the most original methods for solving problems of any of them. But most often the clowns think and move as one. They sometimes speak and act in unison, while in other instances they echo each others' lines and gestures exactly, in sequence.

Also useful at the plays' climaxes are various *dei ex machinae* which the playwright drops into eight of these plays, resolving them arbitrarily, when they seem as though they have gone on for long enough. The Policeman in Caroline's Household is the closest to the classical *deus ex machina*, coming to the rescue of the sympathetic characters (Harlequin, Pierrot, and Columbine) and offering the villain, Borax, his just deserts. The Angel in Massacre of the Innocents is both a savior and a messenger figure, who does quite literally drop from the heavens.

Aunt Jujube in The Public Life of Pantagleize also appears to be a savior, spiriting Pantagleize away from the dangers that she feels are imminent. But as will be discussed later, she may be an agent from the land of the dead, and not necessarily so benign.

Most often, in fact, these *dei ex machinae* bring death (which always prefigures a resolution to the play) rather than salvation or, as in the case of the Steenport Guard (in The Magpie on the Gibbet), and Curtius (in Venus), they are rendered ineffectual by circumstances. Curtius, who does drop from the ceiling, believes that he is saving the day, but it turns out that he is performing just another in a long line of empty gestures in Venus, none of which bring fulfillment to the world

or satisfaction to the would-be saviors, as they had hoped they would. Nevertheless, these characters enter with force and unexpectedness toward the end of the action. Apart from those mentioned above, the *dei ex machinae* figures include the masks of Carnival Death in Ostend Maskers and A Night of Pity and the contents of the time bomb in Transfiguration in the Circus: Luna, the Manager, and the Policemen.

The device of *deus ex machina* is organic to these short one-acts in which the puppeteer hands of the playwright can almost always be seen moving in the flies. Their brevity actually require the surprise and precipitateness of these characters' entrances.

These plays also sport a wide array of non- and semi-human characters: animals, witches, statues, dummies, deities, devils, folklore figures, colors, masks, and natural elements. The prevalence of these beings in Ghelderode's work has been explained in several ways.¹ The Ensorian masks used in Ostend Maskers and A Night of Pity, for instance, are envoys from the terrifying, uncontrollable world of nightmares, embodying the dreamer's anxieties and fears. They torment, mock, and refract the dreamer. They enhance the mood of carnival that surrounds both plays, specifically the subjective carnival that appealed so much to Ghelderode's imagination.

Elizabeth Bogaert claims that the masks epitomize the transition between life and death. Characters from Miss Jairus and Ostend Maskers ritually don masks at death's approach. It is as though the mobile features of the live human were losing elasticity and are half-way toward

¹Francis, L'éternel aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode, pp. 197-200; Pronko, p. 169.

the rigidity of death, when a character puts a fixed costume over his own face. They also concretize desires, liberate the man who wears one from his social context, and facilitate adaptations to varied and multiple forms.¹ When characters divest themselves of their masks, in Ostend Maskers, for instance, major reversals ensue. The Three Harridans transform themselves into beautiful young chorus girls and Death and the Devil, at the end, reveal themselves as the Vermin's buddies, not at all the malevolent forces they appeared to be. And as Bogaert observes, by donning (becoming) a mask himself, the Vermin liberates himself from the nightmare world which had plagued him throughout the dream. He, in effect, is assimilated into the dream. On the other hand, it is possible that the Vermin is being liberated from life and escaping to death after all. A Czech production of Ostend Maskers suggested that:

. . . the revelry of the occasion [is] only partially upset by one's recollection that the gold mask is also a traditional one for the dying King and that the dance [which ends Ostend Maskers] also might be taken as a jarring dance of death.²

Ghelderode himself linked the statues, dummies, and puppets in his work with death.³ The Mask of Carnival Death in A Night of Pity acts Charon's part, transporting the Woman to another world. Venus, in the play of the same name, is attempting to become like a famous statue (an effigy of which is on stage), a symbol of a dead culture, and has herself chopped up to do so.

¹Bogaert, pp. 108-133.

²Jarka Burian, "Otomar Krejca's Use of the Mask," The Drama Review (Vol. 18, no. 1 (T-61), March, 1974), p. 48.

³Paul Hellyn, "Michel de Ghelderode et la solitude," International Theatre Information (Summer, 1972), p. 15.

Paul Levitt observes that even the humans in these plays (the title figures in *The Old Men* being an example)¹ walk a thin line between humanity and puppethood. "Traditionally marionettes -- and this is also true of Ghelderode's characters -- are caricatures of human beings, not replicas. Their faces are painted and carved into one relentless expression."² Very often representing one unchanged aspect of personality, the effigies just as often are used as a sign of the kinship between dummies and man, a reflection of man's inflexibility and insensitivity.

Roland Beyen associates the use of dummies, mannequins, and marionettes with Ghelderode's understanding of implacable destiny (that man has as much volition as a dummy), and elsewhere with his view of society as an inhuman masquerade. He too feels that Ghelderode's characters, even the humans, act like puppets at times, offering the ones in Piet Bouteille as an example.³

The opposite charge, that the dummies carry on the human masquerade, is borne out in Adrian and Jusemina in which the animals and the comet plot and scheme, evincing the basest traits of human social conduct. The airs that both the peacock and the unicorn put on are typical of human snobbery and vanity, though depicted here as the defensive tactics of love-play. And the comet's hair-brained manner, coupled with her flirtatiousness and proclivity for vanishing just

¹Castro, p. 91. Roland Beyen, Ghelderode, p. 12, offers the characters in Piet Bouteille as another example.

²Paul Levitt, "Ghelderode and Puppet Theatre," The French Review (XLVIII, no. 6, May, 1975), p. 976.

³Beyen, Ghelderode, pp. 25-26, 122.

before the consummation of love, is clearly human. Beyen notes that many of Ghelderode's characters resemble animals.¹ Here, in reverse, the animal characters he introduces evince human behavior.

Eglon, Adrian, and Jusemina, though initially part of this mode of hypocritical romantic behavior, rise above it at the end, transcending the norm to which the animals conform. Animals are used also as a satirical device in one instance. Ghelderode includes a chorus in The Public Life of Pantagleize of "All the dogs of Greece," thus mocking the classical convention and sending up the Cynical philosophers, derogatorily known as, "the dogs"; their master, Diogenes, is Pantagleize's non-conforming forerunner and teacher.

Sun and Rain in Rainbow also exemplify the coyness of human romantic conduct and the pain it brings about. In this case the negative aspects are distanced by being set in the lighter plane of the fairy tale.

Aunt Jujube (from The Public Life of Pantagleize) and Mankabena (from The Magpie on the Gibbet), the witches, could be lusty peasant women, but for their supernatural activities, which include flying through the air and turning cannibal. But even those (Mankabena -- "I eat death, rot; when I was young, och, I munched on strong young men, live birds I swallowed.") are merely metaphorical expressions of life's patterns, gorging first on love, later on wormwood.

The most poignant members of this semi-human catalogue, those which embody Ghelderode's sense of human destiny, are the dummies and characters from theatrical tradition in Caroline's Household. The balls

¹Ibid., pp. 93-94.

which unendingly hit Pamela, Spiridon, and Suskanel, and which they have no choice but to endure, suggest a pessimistic metaphor for the experience of life. Dummies exist to be abused. Never-ending punishment is their lot, until they absorb a measure of the cruelty which inspires their tormentors and respond in kind by committing atrocities the like of which only humans are capable. And when they do become cruel and callous like humans, they are freed from the prison of their dummy existence. Aureliu Weiss has criticized Ghelderode for peopling his plays with dead, vapid, non-human characters,¹ overlooking the possibility that Ghelderode's taste for figures made of cardboard and straw may point to an attitude that human beings, in general, are like dummies. Nor does their lack of "depth" necessarily imply a dramaturgical shortcoming in plays in which the main interest is not primarily psychological.

The meek of the earth who never retaliate, but absorb the blows of destiny ad infinitum, Pierrot, Harlequin, and Columbine,² are the artists of the world. They are set apart from the Boraxes and the dummies by their sensitivity, their humankindness, and their inexhaustible aptitude for being punished. They are immortal, since they are eternal figures of commedia, welcome nowhere and out of place in the pragmatic modern world. As well-meaning and harmless as they are, they are universally scorned. It is their lot--and this is idiosyncratic

¹Weiss, p. 36.

²Maurice Gauchez, "Michel de Ghelderode," Le Flambeau (Feb., 1936), p. 222, dubs the cruelty Harlequin, Pierrot, and Columbine suffer, "The massacre of the innocents." It is small wonder that that particular biblical story stirred Ghelderode's imagination, even to dramatizing it.

of the Ghelderodian hero--that they simply fit neither in their time nor place.¹ In these characters Ghelderode invests the full power of identification for the audience.

Pierrot, Harlequin, and Columbine are endowed with all the qualities which typify Ghelderode's sympathetically drawn heroes. David Grossvogel notes that the actor himself is the central figure of Ghelderode's dramatic world, to whom the puppets and mannequins are cousins and fellow artists, likewise exalted through suffering.² "But what if we got something to live on, by suffering in this way? And then we remain ourselves, we remain artists," asserts Harlequin as he considers employment in the massacre game.

But the knot that binds artist with dummy is more intricate yet: Ghelderode's actors, clowns, and dummies also share a marked affinity with the suffering Christ.³ The artist is a single character who wears many masks and appears everywhere in Ghelderode's drama, including these short plays. He is the dreamer, the clown, the creator, and the dummy. At the vortex of many of the plays under discussion,⁴ he is the most multi-dimensional and paradoxical of characters in Ghelderode's oeuvre.

Blockheads is a slight, disregarded play,⁵ one which has never

¹Grossvogel, p. 280.

²Ibid., pp. 259-63.

³Ibid., p. 265.

⁴Deberdt-Malaquais, p. 127.

⁵As mentioned earlier Elisabeth Deberdt-Malaquais, p. 15, is the only critic to have mentioned Blockheads, and that in a passing reference.

been produced, but it contains the most developed example of this protean figure, here called the Poet. He is both juxtaposed and identified with the six dummies onstage with him as well as with "the living god," presumably Jesus who, he tells us, is about to be killed. Like the dummies, he is victimized by life's buffeting and bears the burden for all mankind. Jesus, too, is about to be martyred; a triple mirror is evoked. But, also like the dummies, who seem to be society's leaders and prime movers (a general, a scholar, a dowager, a black boxer, an anarchist, and a financier), he can be insensitive, even enormously cruel and destructive to the constellation of people in his life. He smacks the dummies, piqued at seeing his own insensitivity mirrored in their unresponsive visages. His immediate, self-deprecating contrition is Christ-like, and again, is felt in deference to the dummies' own superior capacity for enduring suffering.

And above all, he sees, dreams, and creates, these abilities bringing him and his relations nothing but pain. As David Grossvogel as observed, the suffering he endures makes him vindictive and self-abusive: "The coarse puppet heads and Ensor masks, the cadaverous faces of the clowns, are pathological symptoms of his [Ghelderode's] character's struggle: he becomes as monumentally contorted as the circumstances that torture him."¹ The Poet in Blockheads confesses that his vocation is a mere mask and tears it off, revealing another one. More masks are torn off, that of the poseur, that of the villain, that of the prophet, until the Poet stands naked before us, altogether like

¹Grossvogel, p. 275.

Christ himself, about to be society's sacrificial lamb, an archetypal character Wolfgang Kayser identifies as the leidende kreatur.¹

But the poet's is not the only guise this sacrificial lamb wears. He insinuates his essence into the bodies of Lamprido (in The Blind Men), Hamlet (Hamlet's Grief), Voske Doublebasin and Tyl Ulenspiegel (The Magpie on the Gibbet), Folia and the King (Escurial), Barbara (The Old Men), Bacchus (A Night of Pity), Mister Clown (Transfiguration in the Circus), Piet, Madeleine, and Jef (Piet Bouteille), Venus (Venus), the Diver and the Octopus (Dreams Drowning), Duvelor (Duvelor), Angel Partibuze (Rainbow), Pantagleize (The Public Life of Pantagleize), the Vermin (Ostend Maskers), the Watchman (The Strange Rider), St. George (The Liar's Club), and the Author (Three Actors and their Drama). He occupies the central position in every play which can be said to have one and an auxiliary spot in several others, assuming the proportions of an obsession. The above characters do not, in each case, evince all the intricacies of the Poet in Blockheads; many have but one or two of his features or dimensions.

The dreamer aspect predominates in Pantagleize, the Vermin, and the Diver. Visions freely issue from these characters' heads. Sometimes the dreamer suffers at the hands of the illusory figures he creates, as with the Vermin and Borax. Nadine Castro has the impression

¹This is defined as a suffering individual with a soul, who is contrasted to vapid types. Kayser offers Woyzeck and Marie in Buchner's Woyzeck as examples; they contrast with such flat characters as the General and the Doctor. Wolfgang Kayser, The Grotesque in Art and Literature (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), p. 200.

that Caroline's Household is Borax's bad dream from start to finish.¹ He incarnates nightmares from his own guilt; he invests his inanimate victims with life, and they destroy him. Pantagleize, nominally a philosopher, barely escapes a kind of crucifixion, planned for him by the philistines in recompense for his nonconformity, the artist's inescapable stance. In reverse, the Diver chastises the philistine in Drowned Dreams, taking delicious revenge on the literal-minded Dealer who disbelieves and denigrates his visions.²

The Poet, the Author, St. George, Mister Clown, Venus, the Octopus, and Angel Partibuze are various artists, though Pantagleize might also be included with this sub-group since he executes some dadaist verses. The Author (in Three Actors and Their Drama) is a failure. He writes poetic theatre centering on the Middle Ages, heart-felt but laughable tripe. The play-within-the-play is reminiscent both of Villiers de l'Isle Adam's Axel and the play-within-the-play in Chekhov's The Seagull which seemed to parody the decadent school. The Author drips with self-pity and laments being great but misunderstood. The actors, like Christ's disciples, feel ambivalent about the work they are performing, judging it to be, "splendid," but, "baffling." Finally, they are heartless mercenary bunglers who "betray" the author's intentions, as the disciples betrayed Christ. The Author offers himself as a sacrifice for their incompetence.

¹Castro, p. 98.

²The explorer is likened to an artist. As Ghelderode paints him, he virtually creates the territories he discovers. Like artistic creation, geographic exploration involves risk-taking, a surrender of rational faculties and material possessions, and making intuitive leaps.

St. George (in The Liar's Club) is a shiftless, parasitic poet, crippled by malaise. The "baroque" dream he casually relates to Luna, in which he came upon her laundering shrouds, is more evocative than the silly poem he deliberately creates to commemorate her charms. He is, however, capable of heroics and succeeds in confounding Ben Samuel's scheme. But St. George is greatly reduced in stature from his namesake, a parlor-game hero jousting with a backwater dragon. Ghelderode's Hamlet is of the same ilk, a lethargic poete maudit, only capable of producing stale and unprofitable epitaphs, impotent both as an artist and as savior of his loved one.

Mister Clown (in Transfiguration in the Circus) is the progenitor of revolution, a clever figure at first, who gets carried away with self-deification and power. Self-hatred consumes him later on when his romantic plans are thwarted; he then sets to annihilating himself and blowing up the world with him. The revolution is at once a creative and destructive process, Mister Clown both selfless and egotistical.

Venus (or Julie), in Venus, is transforming herself into an art object, again with painful results. Her intention in slicing her arms off is altruistic, for the elevation of civilization, but she discovers that the actual butchering is degrading and self-destructive. The attempt at artistic creation and agony merge in these characters.

The Octopus and Angel Partibuze are more detached artists than their counterparts, but they may well be nonchalant, inhabiting as they do, the ocean and sky respectively. Removed from the earth's restraints, the artist has an easier time of it. Both characters successfully and painlessly create vast though fleeting frescoes, dancing across the

ocean floor and projected onto the heavens.

Piet, Jef, and Madeleine incarnate the holy trinity, and Piet enacts the passion as the play proceeds; his lines are limited to groans. Like Christ, he is reviled by the base, like Him he suffers for others' sins and engenders a miraculous cure. Another pure victim is Voske Doublebasin, the poor, inarticulate convict. His sacrifice, though comic, is a monumental error, since he is punished for the jolly transgressions of Tyl Ulenspiegel, society's scapegoat and critic. Tyl, by the way, though physically absent from The Magpie on the Gibbet, is still another sort of creator, a practitioner of practical jokes and clever stratagems. His Flemish prankstership pervades this play, in fact creating the entire situation; his plot, in this case, cheats society out of its martyr.

Duvelor is also infused with the spirit of Tyl, and delights in upsetting the status quo, by slaughtering the complacent bourgeoisie. Mischievousness is but one more aspect of this multi-faceted, ubiquitous figure. He is the poet's wished-for scourge of the bourgeois hypocrites, power-invested priests, businessmen, and lawyers, as well as the cheating, scolding wives and their obnoxious paramours.

Still another incarnation is that of the one who "sees," the conscious individual who observes the general run of human folly, ineptness, and spiritual slumber.¹ Although only the central figure in The Strange Rider is called the Watchman, both Barbara from The Old Men

¹"Allegorically speaking, contemporary man is in a permanent state of forgetfulness -- one in which his archetypal unconscious, his dream world, his magical powers have been anesthetized." Gloria Feman Ohrenstein, The Theatre of the Marvelous (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 64-65.

and Lamprido from The Blind Men possess the faculty of understanding and observing human frailty suggested by that appellation. All these watchmen absorb abuse without complaint, martyrs to the limited human beings surrounding them who have to be tricked into waking up. They also suffer from being among the elect who "see." Their superior insight confronts them squarely with the everlasting disparity between Christian ideals and rude practice.

The artist/dreamer/Christ characters are among the best developed in the short one-act plays. Percival Wilde has observed that the one-act form precludes detailed, satisfying development of every character. Rather, he recommends a single major, complex character juxtaposed with an array of flat character types,¹ a principle Ghelderode has followed in at least seven of these plays. Wilde endorses the use of "type" characters in one-act plays, symbols in "human shorthand" who evince a single, "dominant recognizable attribute."²

Although Ghelderode's critics have often observed and almost as frequently condemned his prevalent use of "stock," "flat," or "type" characters, the employment of them seems to be a natural adjustment in the one-act form,³ where the juxtaposition between "flat" and "round" characters economically realizes an essential dramatic conflict. In any case, in-depth psychological studies are not Ghelderode's chief concern in his one-act plays, which are generally moral takes wherein schematized

¹Wilde, p. 36.

²Ibid., p. 272.

³See: Collins, pp. 25-26, 51; Grossvogel, pp. 276-277; Levitt, p. 976; Weiss, pp. 36, 58-59; Wellwarth, p. 98.

characterization is most appropriate.

Very often the types are society's representatives, characters introduced to be ridiculed. Among them are all the law's representatives in The Magpie on the Gibbet (Hermes de Fonseca, Carloo, Jodem, Hondeketter, and Snoeck), the Dealer (Dreams Drowning), the Forensic Pathologist and the Three Politicians (The Public Life of Pantagleize), Lepisser (Duvelor), Curtius, the archeologist (Venus), and all the clergy: the Monk (Escorial), Bonifacius (Piet Bouteille), Father John (Rainbow), Father Kletsof (Duvelor), and Herod (Massacre of the Innocents). These are the pedants, hypocrites, and bureaucrats, the unmitigated villains, the unimaginative and immune-to-suffering who surround the poet-hero. The clusters of humanity in The Blind Men, The Old Men, The Strange Rider, Piet Bouteille, and the nameless shadow people in A Night of Pity are also typed and often unsympathetic. They provide the uni-dimensional human background which highlights Ghelderode's multi-faceted hero. He is an individual; they are mass. He is sincere (though sometimes malevolent); they are corrupt; he is complex, they are simple; he suffers, they are complacent.

In these plays, also, Ghelderode includes the racial stereotypes which have excited some consternation among the critics. His supposedly unsympathetic portraits of Jews and Blacks (presumably other types in the human menagerie) have raised disapproval from Roland Beyen, David Grossvogel, and Micheline Herz.¹

¹A full discussion can be found in Beyen, Michel de Ghelderode ou la Hantise du Masque, pp. 414-427, wherein the author examines many critics' viewpoints, as well as Ghelderode's own thoughts on the subject of Jews, elucidated in his correspondence, and concludes that the playwright was racist.

The most flagrant examples in the short plays are Ben Samuel, a Shylock figure in The Liar's Club, and Spiridon, the half-man, half-simian in Caroline's Household. The former tallies exactly with the money-hungry, venomous, pound of flesh-exacting beast of popular tradition. He is painted in dark tones as the evil remnant of Luna's past come back to haunt her. That he also shines the naked truth on all the members of this self-deluding club is overshadowed by his aberrant coarseness, arrogance, and vindictiveness.

Spiridon is referred to as, "a gorilla," a "cannibal," as particularly virile owing to his, "brutality, stupidity, and coarse lust," and, "a negro, an ape, or both." These epithets cruelly typify the literary treatment of blacks through the ages, and represent a flaw in Ghelderode's ethics, if not an exception to his aesthetics, in that they are consistent with the many other unsympathetic "flat" characters in his work.

Other instances of these racial slurs occur in Duvelor, in which marrying "a Jew or a negro" is offered as a slightly more ludicrous alternative to wedding the devil. And in Blockheads a Black boxer is included in the line-up of dummies. While his aggressive virility may intimidate the poet, he is surely an anomaly here, as the other dummies are the great of the world. So one can justify the inclusion of a Black man by ascribing it to a consistent ethnic attitude Ghelderode exhibits here and elsewhere in his plays, although the treatment of Jews and Blacks in art has been so pervasively derogatory that it may be unfair to imply that Ghelderode was exceptional in this respect. Perhaps it would be better to regard the above example as paradigms of a centuries-

old norm.

Cultivated Kapman, the teutonic butcher and cannibal in Venus, is a strange hybrid, who accurately predicts the paradoxical attributes the Nazis eventually were to display. The character description--("Red. Iron cross. Bloody apron. Knife in belt. Yellow gloves and monocle.")--prepares us for a flat portrayal. And Kapman does epitomize the cruel, easily satirized German with whom the allies had tangled in World War I, a conflagration not long over at the time Venus was written. He also startlingly predicts the German who will terrorize the world a few years later in World War II ("The future is in butchers."). A devotee of Lautréamont's Les Chants de Maldoror, he whistles the Heroic Symphony, apparently knows cubism, and quotes Petronius, evincing an admirable love of the arts and humanities. Furthermore, he flirts with de Romeo and drops hints that he has bi-sexual leanings (" . . . young men are the only ones I carve up with sincerity," and in a paroxysm of sexual pleasure, kissing Venus' arms, "They belong to a young effeminate man. They belong to a young masculine girl. . . ."), again fulfilling the complex Nazi personality. Many of them loved art and had peculiar sexual proclivities.

A cousin of Kapman's, the Policeman in Caroline's Household, is also a curious figure. "A tiny castrati voice" springs from his huge cop's physique, and he boasts of his artist's discerning eye. His aptitude for grammatical subtleties ("Ubiquity means: faculty of being found at the same moment in many places at great remove, one from the other," and "I, personal pronoun, first person singular.") is another example of his unlikely talents.

Language and Sound

Ghelderode was first and foremost an experimenter,¹ albeit one who often looked backwards before proceeding on. His experiments, in language are nowhere so balanced by restraint as in these short plays. For here, what Roland Beyen calls "la fête des mots,"² is bridled by brevity. There is ample evidence of essays into new areas, but always concomitant with it a consideration for economy.

Ghelderode is a playwright with a proclivity for long, rambling monologues and soliloquies. They can be found in the short plays too, but are tempered in several ways. First of all, there are fewer of them.³ Blockheads consists of a single speech. Some of the other plays (i.e., Duvelor and Dreams Drowning) contain, amid dialogue, but a single long monologue. Others contain two, i.e., Venus, The Women at the Tomb, and The Strange Rider. Monologues are interspersed throughout the other plays, but are shorter than those in the long one-act and multi-act plays, as in: A Night of Pity, Adrian and Jusemina, Rainbow, The Magpie on the Gibbet, Caroline's Household, Escurial, and The Public Life of Pantagleize.

Another technique Ghelderode occasionally uses to take the sting off the verbiage is the active, rather than the reactive, lyrical or narrative monologue, one in which the speaker is energetically pursuing a goal while, or by, holding forth. Borax, for instance, speaks at

¹Grossvogel, p. 310.

²Beyen, Ghelderode, p. 57.

³Marie Collins, p. 51, for instance, notes their absence in The Magpie on the Gibbet.

length in the middle of Caroline's Household, but the words grow out of his attempts to vanquish the dummies by throwing balls at them. The Policeman in the same play is conducting a Sherlock Holmesian investigation, the words of his long monologue being uttered by the way.

Sometimes the words of a monologue, augment a ritualistic activity, as they do when Kapman (Venus) juggles and sharpens his knives in preparation for the butchery to come.

The laments of the various lovelorn characters in Adrian and Jusemina, which seem like obligatory parts of the rites of spring, as well as Mister Clown's revolutionary manifestoes (in Transfiguration in the Circus) all seem like necessary preambles to action.

More often, though, Ghelderode extends his practice (from his longer plays) of writing lyrical monologues, establishing moods and ventilating feelings (e.g., Bacchus' speeches in A Night of Pity, Petronelle's in Rainbow, Eglon's in Adrian and Jusemina, Venus' and Curtius' in Venus, Pantagleize's in The Public Life of Pantagleize) and narrative monologues, offering exposition of the story and explicating the onstage action (e.g., Fluoresque in Adrian and Jusemina, the Octopus in Dreams Drowning, and the Watchman in The Strange Rider), of the sort which have earned him his reputation as a "poet of the theatre" and a "poetic playwright."¹

Sometimes, in these short plays, Ghelderode intends characters to seem over-talkative. Their speeches are not, in clock time, very

¹Beyen, Ghelderode, pp. 144-146; Adrien Jans, La Vie de Ghelderode: Ange et démon (Paris: Hachette-Littérature, 1973), pp. 139-143.

long, but seem so owing to the pompous language in which they are couched or in light of the attempts of another character trying and failing to interject his own point of view.

In The Public Life of Pantagleize the Politician's speeches, one right after the other, seem long-winded because they employ a "bureaucrat-ese" associated with verbosity. The cumulative effect is one of never-ending rhetoric, but Ghelderode achieves it with relatively few words. Bonifacius' three monologues (Piet Bouteille) also produce the feeling of prolixity, because of his pious bombast laced with Latin. Actually his speeches are quite lean, with very few dispensable sentiments, as the following example indicates:

My daughters! My friends! I am moved, touched. Courage, woman, and you, son. The hour strikes for each one. Hodi mihi, cras tibi, which means, Today for me, tomorrow for you. . . . Dear soul! What a serene countenance! He understands that I am bringing him confidence and hope. He can go to sleep in peace, seeing that I am here. . . . (Heartily) Our good old Piet! You are not too well, it seems? I was passing in the neighborhood, as it happened.

This speech, quite compactly, expresses several thoughts. First of all, Bonifacius' obviously bogus sympathy is suggested in four words. He reminds his flock, however satirically, that death is waiting for all of them, that mortality is the universal lot, tying in with an important theme throughout the work. The touch of Latin makes it funny. His observation that Piet is quiet and serene makes a buffoon of him in view of Piet's contorted face and anguished screams. His failure to arouse Piet to an articulate, agreeable response, ends the speech on a dying fall, a deflationary note which points up his impotence in the face of death and renders him ludicrous.

The interchange between the court officials and Voske Doublebasin,

the wrongly accused victim in The Magpie on the Gibbet, works a variation on the interrupted speech. Each official, in turn, informs the convict of yet another absurd reason to be grateful for being hanged. None of them speaks for very long, but Voske's futile attempt to answer them, "Thanks! But. . . ." is repeated seven times. His sincere desire to contribute is frustrated so often by their insistent, self-promoting rhetoric, that the audience perceives the officials as long-winded, although, by Ghelderodian standards, their speeches are not lengthy.

The increasingly shorter soliloquies which are the mode of communication and non-communication in Adrian and Jusemina (reenforcing the isolation enveloping the characters who speak them) employ a rococo, curlicued diction, again giving the impression of verbosity, as can be seen in the following example:

ASTONIFANTASIUS - Bless you, yes, I'm bursting because of this! This mule believes anything is permitted her just because she's got a swordfish on her frontispiece. She comes to me: "My dear Leon." Imagine! I'm called Astonifantasius, that's to say, astonishing fantasy, and my authors date back to the story of Renard. This Cornebelline, on the other hand, comes right out of an omnegang and has no parchment except her skin, which isn't even as good for stretching on a drum as an ignoramus's is. I no longer feel so faint.

If a soliloquy is sometimes calculated by the author to seem aimless or gratuitous, as holds for Pantagleize's single dadaistic "tirade," an apostrophe to the sun, it is also fairly short:

PANTAGLEIZE - Light me up outside, but inside as well, since I've got to find a definition for pan-pan which I used to consider a dance for the youth of Athens, which lives at night, when it was modestly supposed to be philosophy, a universal vision, a science auxiliary to the powerful and magnanimous pataphysical wisdom of the future (as the omens reveal to me) and of which Western man will say its (He yawns.) necessity inevitably makes itself felt! (He yawns.) The pan-pan is. . . . The pan. . . .

Again (as with Bonifacius' monologue), there is a comic wind-down at the

end, punctuated by yawning, which makes the preceding words seem to have been extensive, whereas, in point of fact, the speech is short. Pantagleize is given, in private, to nonsense rhymes, usually taking off from the first syllable of his name. They are brief and illuminate his whimsical, child-like nature.

Sometimes, as in Duvelor and Adrian and Jusemina, one gets the sense that a soliloquy is being delivered, except its extreme brevity rather earns it the status of an aside. An example occurs after Duvelor has invited Melanie and her Intended to look for gold in his cellar. They have gone and he, alone, gloats:

They'll take their nocturnal voyage through the black sulphurous country! (He goes down also, and terrible screams are heard: "Help! It's the devil! He's assassinating me." Duvelor comes up again laughing.) There they are, married!

The largest share of words in Dreams Drowning goes to the Octopus' narration. Here Ghelderode goes to the limit of his innovative treatment of language. The verbal images float up like random bubbles, connecting with others pellmell in an expressionistic montage:

Atlanta, intoxicated mystic, pearl-swallower, animal charmer, winged men, terrifying mathematician, go into your municipal museum, for you are in fashion, and your civil status vexes the Institutes. They'll surround you up to the deepest parts of the water, without realizing that you are soluble, like God the Father, who's a fish and lives in his laboratory in the under-suns of the ocean.

One image intuitively meshes with the next, following the elastic logic of dreams. The character of Atlanta (who is concurrently acted by a mime) is introduced with unlikely, paradoxical titles. The passage's non-discursive thought hurtles associatively from one image to the next without concern for sense or economy, thus evoking the magical world of pre-history. The elastic style then shifts radically as the Octopus

brings us up to more recent history, in which the compression (as opposed to the earlier free play) of images creates a rhythm of the machine and the pace of modern life, as the narrator's speech draws to a close:

They sang the Marseillaise, took ether, and said prayers: My God, give these soldiers a little oxygen! The moral is good, the fatherland proclaiming it; dear little boats which go under water, sky-writing, airplanes complain about the buzzing sound.

So much is left out that five lines express all of World War I and its prosperous aftermath. The liberties that in the first part of the Octopus' speech evoke a fairy tale antique age, later on describe the frantic, progressively disjointed rhythm of modern living.

By and large Ghelderode's short one-act plays rely not so much on monologue as on rhythmically patterned dialogue, a technique which, though present in his longer plays, is used proportionately less there. In Act II of Pantagleize, for instance, there is an exceptional stichomythic exchange between Pantagleize and Rachel Silberschatz. They fire brief lines at each other as they make love. However, a characteristic mode of address in this full-length work is by lengthy, rambling monologues. The exigencies of brevity in the short plays constrain Ghelderode to the widespread use of such pared-down dialogues.

The dialogue of The Massacre of the Innocents is written in a child-like mode, with simple-minded vocabulary and curt, wooden diction, suitable to the wooden actors for which it is intended, as well as the primitive folklore spirit in which it is conceived:

MARY - It's the neighbor who's here to see how we're doing.

NEIGHBOR - Hello, carpenter. Is the infant Jesus born yet?

JOSEPH - Not yet, but he's on his way! He'll be a very beautiful child!

MARY - It was the angel who told me I was going to have him!

NEIGHBOR - You are blessed among women!

Most of the exchanges in The Public Life of Pantagleize are in the form of an examination, each side giving away as little as possible, the interrogators trying to intimidate, Pantagleize falling in with their mode of address, but also trying to evade and conceal. Very often the sentences are compressed into fragmented phrases as in the following exchange:

PANTAGLEIZE - That's what I'm standing here for.

CITY GUARD - What for?

PANTAGLEIZE - Summoned. And listening to you, citizen.

CITY GUARD - I'm the representative of the law.

PANTAGLEIZE - Enter and make yourself at home.

CITY GUARD - Pantagleize?

PANTAGLEIZE - Me, yes! So?

There is a structure to much of the dialogue reminiscent of responsorial psalmody. The best example of ritualistic patterns appear in Transfiguration in the Circus, in which all five clowns frequently echo each others' sentiments:

PICCOCO - In this act Mister Clown won't have to work, but I, Piccolo, I will have to work!

CASIMIR - And I, Casimir!

DUDULE - And I, Dudule!

BABYLAS - And I, Babylas!

AUGUST - And I, August!

Or they will repeat the same thought, but multiply it each time:

MISTER CLOWN - Come! . . . To work!

PICCOLO - No!

MISTER CLOWN - Yes!

BABYLAS - No, no!

MISTER CLOWN - Yes, yes!

AUGUST - No, no, no!
 MISTER CLOWN - Yes, yes, yes!
 DUDULE - No, no, no, no!
 MISTER CLOWN - Yes, yes, yes, yes!
 CASIMIR - No, no, no, no, no!
 MISTER CLOWN - Why!

There is at once a liturgical pattern and one prevalent in vaudeville. With dialogue, as with monologue, Ghelderode can achieve a ritual mood, largely by repeating a pattern. The assignment of revolutionary seats of power is an example:

MISTER CLOWN - I name you all clown ministers!
 AUGUST - Of what?
 MISTER CLOWN - Of finance, if you bring back the cash box!
 CASIMIR - and I?
 MISTER CLOWN - You are the musical clown? I name you minister of the fine arts!
 DUDULE - And I?
 MISTER CLOWN - You're an acrobat on the high wire? I name you minister of international affairs!
 PICCOLO - And I?
 MISTER CLOWN - You, you're the sword swallower I name you minister of war!
 BABYLAS - And I?
 MISTER CLOWN - What do you do in the circus?
 BABYLAS - I help to roll up the carpets as I walk on them, I run around the ring, I shout, and when the others have rolled up the carpets, I brush off my costume!
 MISTER CLOWN - You are the minister of labor! Go clown ministers!

A similar pattern is observable in The Blind Men and Piet Bouteille,¹ in which the groups of three, the blind men and the worthy

¹Roland Beyen, Ghelderode, p. 12, takes cognizance of the syncopated delivery in this play.

souls respectively, emit utterances relay fashion. Both plays are constructed in threes. As observed before, trios of characters begin and end Piet Bouteille. There are also three blind men. Both plays have religious overtones and derive from the image of the Holy Trinity. And this motif is reflected in the dialogue. Three characters speak in canon, lines are often divided into three phrases, and the number three is even invoked, as in a typical segment from The Blind Men:

DeWitte: That's not from a devil! It's an echo, a true echo, unquestionably an echo from a convent.

Den Os: If this echo would give us alms, or even a pot of brown ale!

De Strop: No more despair! Our pains, our hunger, our thirst are going to finish. I know it. Will you hear the good news? I can see it more clearly than you.

De Witte: Twofold liar! You were born blind like us.

Den Os: Threefold liar! You are the blindest of the three of us. All the same, tell us this good news.

De Strop: Friends of my sorrow, hear it: we are no longer far from Rome!

"Threefold liar," marks the peak of the energy, and the triple segmentation in, "It's an echo, a true echo, unquestionably an echo from a convent," lends a rhythmic, liturgical flavor to the speech.

The worthy souls in Piet Bouteille utter three-part sentences in unison: "Father! Reverend! Quick!" They also speak in tri-part canon:

Betteke: You will always find little things.

Smots: Even in the lives of saints. . . .

Spinnekop: Things you can reproach anyone with.

Many characters, such as those from The Old Men (who together constitute a single body), build thoughts, as though separate parts of the same mind were being triggered sequentially. The thought is introduced:

THIRD OLD MAN - Yes, after so many years it's just like nothing had ever started.

The sense of futility is heightened through metaphor:

FIFTH OLD MAN - Life is like a wheel which has always turned and will turn forever, even after us.

The thought is elaborated:

SIXTH OLD MAN - We've done so much, we've done so little.

FOURTH OLD MAN - We've done nothing except wait for the life to come.

SEVENTH OLD MAN - And complain about the life we were leaving behind.

EIGHTH OLD MAN - Could it be otherwise?

Examples are offered:

NINTH OLD MAN - I've sailed the seas; I've seen all the countries of the world. I've seen nothing; I've not seen the world.

TENTH OLD MAN - I saw everywhere in the world that men were suffering and dying.

ELEVENTH OLD MAN - I went to war. I learned that men are cruel.

TWELFTH OLD MAN - And I was a gravedigger. If I didn't shovel the earth, I didn't have bread to eat.

Roland Beyen notes the subtle changes of voice in the early plays.¹ The succession of characters in the excerpt above, from The Old Men, who chime in one after the other, suggest the notes of a carillon, the inner dialogue of a single mind. As I will elaborate further in Chapter 2, this orchestral organization of lines probably derives from Maurice Maeterlinck's plays, most notably The Blind.

Patterning by twos, rather than threes, can be discerned in Duvelor, in which many lines are tagged with a two-word refrain that sounds like, "tra-la, tra-la." Some examples of this motif are:

¹Roland Beyen, *Ibid.*, p. 15.

CAPUCHIN - You are damned, damned.

DUVELOR - That's for sure!

CAPUCHIN - And go to the devil, to the devil.

Another example of this ubiquitous pattern is:

DUVELOR - Isn't it time, great Lucifer, isn't it time for me to die, to die?

Not only is the above line finished off with a repeated phrase, but it is bisected, as the lines in The Blind Men are often trisected.

Typically, one character naively echoes another:

MELANIE (bowing) - My father, here's the intended.

INTENDED - My Father, I am the intended.

In some plays, complex sentiments are distilled into one-word expletives, as opposed to the endless trains of thought in Ghelderode's full-length plays. Two examples from Escorial illustrate this technique:

KING - Bells...! Dogs...! Death...! Nightmare...! Death...!
Bells...! Dogs....

The compressed verbal eruptions not only suggest the bells he speaks of, but the King's state of extreme stress as well. At another point these brief images evoke a sentimental vision of the Queen, at this time deceased:

KING - The queen . . . star . . . bee . . . music . . . angel . . .
the queen.

At different points in Rainbow, Father John and Petronelle stuff the enormity of their respective lusts into single words:

FATHER JOHN - Honey!

And:

PETRONELLE - Mustard!

The Angel Partibuse's passion is purely gustatory:

ANGEL - Caramel!

These words condense the recitatives Ghelderode employs elsewhere to one-act, though still poetic, proportions. Kapman (in Venus) reduces his entire romantic philosophy to three words: "Lovers! Double egotism."

Ghelderode sprinkles several of the short one-act plays (Duvelor, The Magpie on the Gibbet, The Massacre of the Innocents, Le Mystère de la Passion de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, and La Tentation de Sainte-Antoine) with Flemish words and expletives. Although he wrote in French and his command of Flemish was rudimentary, many critics consider him a Flemish artist in spirit who, like Fernand Crommelynck, had adopted the French language as an expeditious, but ill-concealed camouflage.¹ Sporadic phrases in the guttural-sounding tongue of Flanders are in keeping with the rustic, folklore texture of the plays in which they are used, and are like clues Ghelderode plants to indicate the heritage with which he identifies.²

Venus is a veritable goldmine of linguistic curiosities and inventions. There is a ryming nonsense invocation which parodies grammar school textbook exercises:

KAPMAN - I summon POU living in the grammars with chou hibou bijou!

¹Some of the authors who treat the question of Ghelderode's Flemish allegiances are: Francis, L'éternel aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode, pp. 17-38, 154-186, 189-199, 230-239, 243-246; Beyen, Michel de Ghelderode ou la Hantise du Masque, pp. 428-448; Jans, pp. 57-71; François Vermeulen, "Michel de Ghelderode et Bruges," Le Trait d'union (Dec., 1972), pp. 39-42; Collins, *passim*.

²The Flemish words in The Magpie on the Gibbet are: niks (nothing), bek (disgust), rots (rotten), tof (chic), scabel (gallows), strop (noose), hangen (let's hang); in The Massacre of the Innocents, they are: blinkante (twinkling), menneke (little gentlemen), schampavie (fleeing to England), koekskes (cookies); in Duvelor, they are: kakedore (chair of doody), Kruis Lieven Heer (rosary); in Adrian and Jusmina: omegang (traditional parade); in La Tentation de Sainte-Antoine: Kiekebisch (chicken meat or made into mince-meat); in Le Mystère de la Passion de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ: pie-kiek (a nick-name for death).

There are echoing refrains:

COUNT ASPIRIN - I am Count Aspirin . . . exiled!

DE ROMEO - And I de Romeo . . . sea knight!

There are snippets of Latin (Duvelor also uses phony Latin when the title character masquerades as a priest) and German exclamatory phrases ("Gott mittuns.") as well. There are extended parodies of the elevated diction used by the Comedie Française ("O defunct arms. . . I want to sing your funeral services on my nostalgic horn.") and degeneration of language at the end, reflecting the dying culture each of the characters is trying to resurrect. This breakdown of the medium of communication is an extension of the loss of history, human values, and artistic heritage. Characters, finally, apostrophize, lament, and declaim terse phrases whose words are devoid of semantic value, and which barely have any logical sequentiality:

COUNT ASPIRIN - I am the male Venus! . . .

KAPMAN (grabbing the count) - . . . What a declaration! . . . So that's what you are!

COUNT ASPIRIN - All the leap years! . . .

VENUS (in extreme crisis) - . . . My arms . . . I want my arms! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN - . . . Come into mine! . . .

KAPMAN - . . . Your arms, madame are my salary! . . .

CURTIUS - . . . What a dirty little world! . . .

Also in Venus is a purely aural interlude, analogous to a better-known one in Artaud's A Jet of Blood which is both visual and aural.¹

¹While many of his critics have jumped at the startling resemblance of Ghelderode's plays to Artaud's and of the correspondence between Ghelderode's plays to Artaud's theoretical proposals, they generally support their contentions by citing either The School for Buffoons or Chronicles of Hell. It is unfortunate that they had not discovered Venus, because it seems to me to be Ghelderode's strongest realization of the theatre of cruelty. It not only debunks treasured myths and

The interludes in these two contemporary plays are enactments of the end of the world, or some version of the apocalypse, the first from Venus, the second from A Jet of Blood:

. . . dynamite flashes, screams, cooing, formidable grating of the hack-saw. The French horn resounds to the left. A taxi horn honks from the right. And all noise stops short. . . .

A pause. Something that sounds like an immense wheel turning and blowing out air is heard. A hurricane separates the two. Then two stars crash into each other, and we see a number of live pieces of human bodies falling down: hands, feet, scalps, masks, colonnades, porches, temples, and alembics, which, however, fall more and more slowly, as if they were falling in a vacuum. Three scorpions fall down, one after the other, and finally a frog, which sets itself down with a maddening, vomit-inducing slowness.

"Lightning, thunder, infernal din," likewise signals the apocalyptic end of Duvelor. The musical motifs into which the lines are organized become pure sound in Ghelderode. Sound effects, offstage voices, singing, and music form part of these plays' texture as they do in the longer works. These auditory elements establish atmosphere instantaneously.

The organ grinding and "shredded waltz" of Caroline's Household evoke the dismal carnival. Similarly the organ in A Night of Pity is joined by the repeating verse of a Nocturnal Vocalist, woven into the play's sound tapestry.

Mankabena's song in The Magpie on the Gibbet introduces the theme

shows them in refreshing, unusual perspectives, but it sets to creating a new mythology of German butchers, White Russian cab drivers, and tedious archaeologists. Its nauseating cannibalism and perversions are well up to Artaud's pleas to evolve a theatre of immediacy. For further discussion of Artaud and Ghelderode, see: Beyen, Ghelderode, pp. 83, 111-112; Castro, p. 82; Helen Hellman, "Hallucination and Cruelty in Artaud and Ghelderode," The French Review (41, no. 1, Oct., 1967), pp. 1-10; Jean Stevo, "Entretiens avec Michel de Ghelderode," Syntexes (April, 1954); Franco Tonelli, L'Esthétique de la Cruauté (Paris: Editions A-G. Nizet, 1972).

of death and hanging, a sinister note which occasionally sounds in this play. And the peasants' chorus, with hurdy-gurdy accompanying, lifts the tone to the devil-may-care merriment that predominates thereafter. The refrain Barbara sings in The Old Men is like a musical reminder from heaven that life is fleeting and that one must be alert to reap its rewards.

The banging of Mille's shoe (backed by Madeleine's moaning) suggests the hammering of nails into Christ's palms, a recurrent theme in Piet Bouteille, whereas the pot-lid banging in The Public Life of Pantagleize establishes a quite divergent mood of playful, anarchic abandon. The air of anarchy (which of course emanates from Pantagleize, himself) culminates in his summation of Pantagleizian philosophy, a single flatulent explosion: "PAN."

Ostend Maskers is, of course, the most visually reliant of all these plays, consisting of physical action accompanied only by sound and music.

Setting and Atmosphere

Ghelderode's settings are always atmospherically evocative, and those in his one-act plays frequently express the works' commanding images.¹ As many of these works are metaphorical visions of human existence observed from diverse, though usually pessimistic and morbid

¹James H. Clay and Daniel Krempel, p. 25, state, "No matter how philosophical, logical, or real most plays seem, their reality, logic, or philosophy are parts of a larger meaning -- a meaning which orders and patterns all these parts and may therefore be called a commanding image. This commanding image is the essence of the playwright's communication. This essence, like the meaning of a dream, is a realization, a concept, a felt significance -- expressed through the impact of the total form."

vantage points, the settings also tend to embody a full world, a self-sufficient and complete vision. Sometimes, as more information is revealed about a setting over the course of a play, it assumes a dynamic, changing complexion, at first benign, and then increasingly malignant, as with the house in The Women at the Tomb.

Many of these settings are deliberately empty or stripped-down, reflecting Ghelderode's vision of the vacuity of terrestrial life. Blockheads has a non-existent set, "a neutral space on which the actors appear." The emptiness of the place supports the void the Poet is hiding beneath all his disguises. Furthermore, this blank stage is appropriate to the theatricalist mode of delivery that the Poet uses to address the dummies, his auditors, who stand for the real audience. The naked stage is as denuded as the relationship between audience and actor in this play.

The characters in Venus are attempting to reconstruct a civilization which has disintegrated. The stage setting ("Nothing," aside from "a huge statue of Venus de Milo on an imitation marble pedestal. She is white and her belly is covered with numbers. The mannequin should be selected from a store for hernial belts and straps.") establishes this ruined society. There is virtually nothing left of it but this decadent image of Venus. The materials from which this classic statue is made are twentieth century artificial--plastic and imitation marble. The aesthetic surface of the statue is neither exalted nor beautiful, but debased and grotesque, its belly violated by mathematical graffiti. Julie, the central figure in the tragic-farce, is attempting to assume the role of Venus, in order to revive

the classical era. She wishes to be a famous effigy, and she is modeling herself after a corrupted imitation of one. There is no possible reunion, in this play, with a past for which all the characters feel nostalgic.

The grotesque effigy is onstage throughout the play to supervise the vain attempts to recapture and reconstruct the past. It is both a mute, though eloquent, character and a piece of scenery. It becomes a central character to the action when Julie worships her at the beginning and when Curtius attempts to supply her with arms. It is otherwise subsidiary, but inescapably, immovably present to mock the fruitless, painful struggles of Curtius, Julie, De Romeo, and Aspirin.

Like Blockheads, Venus is highly theatricalist, starting with the offstage dialogue between an actress and her director, who anticipates the audience's shocked reaction to her nude appearance, followed by a speech delivered directly to the audience. The play is laced with out-of-context pronouncements to the audience: "What is this, a theatre?", "Love dies," "Property is theft!", "Such strong emotions!" The frank starkness of the stage prepares the audience for Venus's characteristic mode of delivery, executed with a half-turn toward the spectators, and for Venus' own bareness.

The stage-as-stage is very much the point of Three Actors and Their Drama, in which the gilded set is merely a facade that the actors exploit in order to enact their private drama. The set here is intended both to heighten the backstage/onstage juxtaposition and to blur it, to demonstrate the interchangeability of the two realms.

Many of the sets are pronouncedly empty, but not always as a means

of expressing their theatricalism. Often they function like blank canvases which set off a relatively static tableau-like action. These plays are like canvases which are being rendered before our eyes or on which finished, stationary images have been painted before the curtain's rise: Piet Bouteille, The Strange Rider, The Old Men, The Magpie on the Gibbet, and The Women at the Tomb. They are largely inspired by Bosch and Breughel, and retain the tone of their sources as well as those artists' compositions and textures.

The dark peasant interior of Piet Bouteille is a bare background, eventually filled by a symmetrical, frozen composition with a chiseled, rough surface. Its poverty gives the impression of a room too small to contain the crowd that stuffs itself within the room's walls, analogous to the way bas reliefs have hardly any negative space to spare around the human figures.

The same sense of people jammed into narrow enclosures, distributed shallowly along a horizontal plane, is also common to The Strange Rider, The Old Men, and The Women at the Tomb. The set of The Strange Rider is dark and flat, overlooked by a tall gothic window, through which no character but the Watchman may look, an outlet to the bright, mystical world. The set literally translates the mystic's vision of humanity's state into visual elements. Mankind is in the dark and down below, deprived of stature and unable to perceive light.¹

¹The imagery Chelderode uses is typical of mystical writings of all schools from Theosophy to Zen Buddhism. For some poignant examples, in which man is depicted as traveling in a closed train compartment and is unable to really know what path the train has taken or what awaits it, or as flying above the world with his eyes closed, see P. D. Ouspensky, The Fourth Way (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), passim.

The Magpie on the Gibbet, though more cheery in tone than either The Old Men or The Strange Rider, is equally pictorial, its characters mounting its Breughelesque hill to carouse, die, or administer death. In production, the set must have the appearance of the last scene in Ingmar Bergman's The Seventh Seal, all the characters dancing in mortal complicity with each other. The commanding image of this play is held in the gibbet, painted an ironic pink. Here in this natural setting, appreciated by all who pass through it, man's institutions are erected: awkward, inorganic, and superfluous. The gibbet's fresh coat of paint mocks its ghastly function, as though it too was on holiday and was determined not to work. The external setting sets The Magpie on the Gibbet apart from the other plays in mood; the bright day and the green grass demand a comedy, albeit one with a dash of the macabre, the dash that the gallows add.

Many of these plays are set, for various reasons, on the outskirts of society. The outskirts can either portend a twilight world of the imagination or a limbo, a spatial representation of the temporal interval between life and death. The Women at the Tomb is in the latter category, since it takes place just after Christ's crucifixion. It is set in an empty house somewhere near Calvary. Whose house is it? No one knows. But the people who gradually enter lend it character. It becomes (as it is used) another waiting room, whose two attendants are agents for life and death respectively. They represent the tenuous balance which Jesus, and by extension, all the characters, and by further extension, all mankind, have just tipped. Death and corruption have triumphed. And as it becomes clearer that a moral disaster is occurring, just before

the women troop off to the grave, it is revealed that they are installed in Judas's house; this is the house of the betrayal for which they are all culpable. Again, an empty playing space augurs both the emptiness of life without Jesus, on the thematic level, and a stage painting which will take shape, on the aesthetic level.

Also on the outskirts, also a limbo, A Night of Pity is set in Bacchus' domain, the world of drunkenness, fever, and oblivion. With the colored lights of the merry-go-round outside and liquor inside the bar, the stage is set for the free play of the unconscious. Like several of these one-act plays (Piet Bouteille, Ostend Maskers, Duvelor, The Liar's Club, and The Women at the Tomb), the street beyond represents the high road of life's affairs; those snatched from the street into the house enter a subjective plane of death and delusion.

The set of A Night of Pity is mutable, like that in The Women at the Tomb. The play's dynamic effects its environment. The liquor which was free at the beginning and which later offers no sedative refuge, turns out to be only water, and then runs out. The merry-go-round, no longer used by children, eventually stops. It was night; it becomes dawn. The world of fancy turns to one of cold, hard reality and death.

Another play on the outskirts (of ancient Athens, this time), in a very "imprecise landscape," has a pipe centerstage which shelters its hero, Pantagleize. His otherwise unencumbered, public existence is lived out in the open. The set has the look of an anachronistic montage, with campaign posters, weeds, canned goods, and the pipe in the foreground, and a picture postcard version of the Acropolis in the background. The set, in fact, with its objects trouvés and its remnants of

classical Greece, includes both clashing modes by which the play works: dada and dialectic, the chaos Pantagleize prefers and the conventions society would impose on him. The set is an uneasy melange of elements, one that proves intolerable for the pursuit of the life-style Pantagleize has chosen. That must finally be conducted in a realm even closer to exurbia, further from the government's influence.

In Duvelor another window and door are lures of the booby trap house in which the antiquated devil resides. This is, again, a house of death, fronted by life's high road. Once inside, the visitors are drawn deeper by their titillated appetites for wealth, alcohol, and ego-fulfillment beyond death's door, the trap door to Duvelor's cellar. Just as the characters pop on the scene via jack-in-the-box, so the set allows Duvelor to shut them up again, this time for good.

Hamlet's Grief, set in a graveyard in the suburbs, is yet another twilight play. Beyond life, beyond action, this play is set in the heart of death's domain. One foot in the grave, one out, the Grave-digger is only visible from the torso up, the rest of his body communing with the earth. It is this locale which stirs Hamlet's curiosity, which draws him for a peep.

Nadine Castro's previously mentioned theory that Caroline's Household is Borax's bad dream is substantiated by the play's setting. The carnival is always the cradle of hallucinations for Chelderode; its bright colors and unlikely sideshows are the stuff of nightmares. The enormous tent in this play breathes with a life of its own, probably filling with the "liquids" of which Borax is so terrified, priming the audience for a logic which includes inert objects coming to life. From

the start, the set is littered with the debris from the dummy massacre which goes on every day, a live image of a cruel world. This play, like A Night of Pity, lasts the space of a night, and dawn brings with it an end to the dreams and awakening, but also death for Borax and a renewal of suffering for the clown trio.

Set in bright sunlight like The Magpie on the Gibbet, and also a comedy, Adrian and Jusemina takes place in a run-down garden. The setting is at once natural, being external and overgrown, but artificial too, being symmetrical and ringed about a sundial. The love matches which can occur here are the very stuff of nature, but assume patterns cultivated by humans. The repetition of the mating dances which have proceeded ad infinitum is signalled by the age and worn-out condition of the garden, a rusty but enduring template for the dance.

The setting for Rainbow predetermines the type of movements the characters can make; all must move in straight lines, though permitted to do so from several directions. The characters cannot go very far, but pop onto the set like ejaculations. The set from Adrian and Jusemina dictates leisurely, circular motions, in the shape of courtly love-making.

Rainbow's setting is fantastic, in the improbable domain of the sky. The barometric hut is like a cuckoo clock which expels people peremptorily, as does Partibuze's projector which shoots forth colors. The entire set is like a climax machine, the apparatus which makes the play's last moment possible. Partibuze, the technician who conducts this marvel is given a large chair in the middle of the stage, pointing up his centrality to the action. His chair is appropriately soft and luxurious. The barometric hut is the receptacle of the humans, Father

John and Petronelle, and a vision of domesticity in little. The natural forces conduct their macrocosmic romance outside the hut, in the heavens, a pictorialization of the distinction between the non-human characters, and the microcosmic humans who make love inside.

The Liar's Club setting is like a museum, decorated in rococo, but faded, glamor. The glass-enshrined siren is like the overwhelming statue in Venus, an extension of the central female figure, a symbol of her spirit, in this case sexual (a siren), but restrained (under glass). Her charms are fading, and the room is dusty. The bar's denizens are liars, and the furniture has an artificial aspect. The season is winter, indicating sterility, which has indeed overtaken this world, prompting its people to warm themselves with self-created delusions. The worst thing in this world of facades would be to be stripped and symbolically left out in the cold, myth-bereft air in the harbor. The worst is precisely what happens: Luna strips off her clothing, and the club members are stripped of their lies. The set is a subtle image of this possibility.

The circus is yet another metaphor for human existence, with man as clown, an image Ghelderode explores in Transfiguration in the Circus. The circus ring is another neutral space, circular, with numerous entrances, the classical setting for ritualized, though ever-delightful shenanigans. Anything can happen there, but whatever does go on is tried and true, yet another eternal pattern.

Conclusions

Ghelderode's short one-act plays depict conclusions: the end of lives, the end of romances, and the end of the world. They partake of

the modernist tendency towards negation, a taste for which is evident in so many facets of these plays. The settings are very often voids. The language is vigorous and sparse. The central characters are usually conscious of their own approaching ends.

The plays' actions are generally static, in keeping with a twentieth century dramatic development first used by Maeterlinck and popular with succeeding avant-gardists up through Beckett. The plays consequently have a strong pictorial emphasis; their images are more significant than other elements, certainly more so than character development, for instance.

Ghelderode lets no one dramatic element escape its usefulness insofar as economy of action is concerned. With character, for instance, he pragmatically includes a master of ceremonies figure in many plays, a fictional surrogate for the author, who explicates and organizes events. Rather than drawing several in-depth characters in each play, he juxtaposes a mass of humanity with a single figure who is generally a variation on Christ, the artist, and the clown. Structurally, the short one-acts' dynamics are manipulated through strict periodicity of energy increments and subtractions.

Such a schematic approach to playwriting is Ghelderode's response to the constraints exacted by the short form. The primary impression these plays leave, then, is one of dramaturgical ingenuity. While the barrenness of Ghelderode's worldview often coincides with the minimal form, it is remarkable that the effects he achieves by so much paring down can, in other instances, be so extravagant and theatrical.

CHAPTER II

SOURCES, INFLUENCES, AND ANALOGUES

Bernard Beckerman has written on the relative realism of various dramatic forms that, "occasionally, as in the circus . . . performers present relatively pure types of artificial . . . activity," and that ritual forms of drama, "divorce themselves from actual life and enter into imaginative existence."¹

Michel de Ghelderode gravitated toward, nay, must have sniffed out from his age and from all those which preceded it forms which contain the highest degree of imaginative isolation (presentationalism) and the most extreme artifice. Ghelderode, like his contemporary, the Russian director Meyerhold, took stabs at symbolism, the circus, puppets, the mime, and fairy tale modes, anything but naturalism.

Apart from other reasons posited for Ghelderode's comprehensive non-naturalistic tendency, a most convincing one lies in the fact that the Vlaamsche Volkstoneel (the Flemish Popular Theatre) was the producing organ for many of his earlier works. The directors of this experimental group looked to the innovators in the Soviet Union, France, and Germany for inspiration. Ghelderode wrote for a theatre that was exuberant with reports of Meyerhold's, Tairov's, Piscator's, and Copeau's anti-naturalistic stagings.²

¹Beckerman, p. 10.

²Beyen, Michel de Ghelderode ou la Hantise du Masque, p. 204.

These one-act plays bear the most conspicuous marks of Ghelderode's experimentation with non-naturalistic modes of all his work, though there are traces of them in the longer plays in more adulterated contexts.

This chapter will be two-pronged. First of all, it will examine Ghelderode's use, in the short one-act plays, of predetermined modes from popular entertainments and theatrical tradition. An audience can easily accept these conventions, thus sparing the play from the responsibility of acclimatizing the audience to an unremitting experimental theatrical mode. Conventional forms, furthermore, bring a homogeneity to those plays which incorporate them, and consequently abet the requirement for unity inherent in the one-act form.

Among the conventional forms discussed will be the fairy tale (Rainbow and Caroline's Household), Greek tragedy (The Public Life of Pantagleize), the puppet play (Duvelor), pantomime (Ostend Maskers), the pastoral (Adrian and Jusemina), the circus (Tranfiguration in the Circus), and the mystery play (The Massacre of the Innocents).

Of those works which rely on predetermined forms, rarely does the borrowed form remain uncontaminated. It is usually mixed with some other genre or is subverted by being juxtaposed with a subject matter and/or tone with which it clashes.

Secondly, contrary to the concept of Ghelderode prevalent in America (which he, as much as anyone, was responsible for promulgating) as a writer of medieval moralities and nothing else, many of these plays demonstrate his conversance and affinity with dramatic and literary currents which were contemporarily "in the air," part of a living avant-

gard vocabulary that had been amassing since the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Ghelderode's symbolist tendencies are most noticeable in The Old Men, The Strange Rider, Piet Bouteille, A Night of Pity, and The Blind Men.¹ The dada and surrealist currents are strongest in Dreams Drowning, The Public Life of Pantagleize, and Venus.

In most cases, Ghelderode's affinities with and recourse to these genres have been noted by someone somewhere. However, such observations have rarely resulted in detailed analysis of how the forms manifest themselves in individual plays (the medieval influence being the big exception). And less attention still has been devoted to the ways in which the forms were assimilated into the short one-act plays in particular.

This chapter will not advance any new discoveries. It will, instead apply and elaborate on those observations which have already been made, insofar as Ghelderode had recourse to pre-existing genres and near-contemporary literary and dramatic schools in the short one-act plays.

Puppet Plays

Jacques Chesnais, in his excellent Histoire Générale des Marionnettes, tells us that in puppet theatre,

¹Roland Beyen, Ghelderode, pp. 9-16, records several critical observances of Ghelderode's debt to Maeterlinck, as well as the playwright's own admission to that effect. He also analyzes the Maeterlinckian thread running through several of these plays. Another brief comparison (between Piet Bouteille and Maeterlinck's dramaturgy) can be found in Francis, L'éternel aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode, p. 111.

Le conventionnel est poussé jusqu'à ses extrêmes limites. Cette convention a été établie par le temps elle correspond à quelque chose de profond en nous et vraiment humain, de millénaire qui la rend lisible sous toutes des latitudes.¹

Ghelderode, knowing that the puppet world is one which not only has universal appeal, but possesses a vocabulary that all the world knows, chose its conventions for several of his plays, notably Duvelor and the "Bible plays," The Massacre of the Innocents, Le Mystère de la Passion de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, La Tentation de Saint-Antoine, and La Grande tentation de Saint-Antoine. Others, which Gelderode originally wrote for puppets, such as The Old Men and The Women at the Tomb, were later revised, so that human actors could perform them.

No preparation is needed in these plays to acclimatize the audience to the puppet world's laws and customs. In performance they are known, seemingly as part of an understanding with which we are born, for "la marionette est vieille comme le monde."²

The puppet world, "ordonné, divisé, réglé, définitif," fits the one-act form like a glove. Its, "rapidité dans l'action, la simplicité de ses gestes,"³ are tools both for acceleration and the homogeneity of effect recommended for this genre.⁴ The puppet's power derives from its simplicity, its stripping away of inessentials.⁵

¹Jacques Chénais, Histoire Générale des Marionnettes (Paris: Bordas, 1947), p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 17.

³Ibid., pp. 21, 27.

⁴Wilde, p. 34.

⁵Peter Arnott, Plays Without People (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 74.

In Duvelor, for instance, there is neither wasted action nor wasted words. Episodes are separated by a mere transitional sentence or two. The major pattern is one of repetition; Duvelor undergoes an identical series of actions over and over, as the number of bodies in the cellar increases. One after the other, the victim enters, proves his human maliciousness and baseness, gets lured to the basement, and is slaughtered. Duvelor exults. The connecting thread consists of Duvelor's own attempt to commit suicide and return home to Hell. Nothing retards or decorates this lean, arithmetical pattern of repetition.

The puppet world is a natural form for Ghelderode. Taken as he was with Flemish folklore, he heartily subscribed to the famous marionettes Bruxelloises.¹ His natural bent toward parody of human foibles (in Duvelor, those of hypocrisy and avarice primarily) is given free vent in a medium with a natural function of caricaturing people.²

Chesnais remarks that the death of naturalism and the rebirth of the puppets' popularity are one and the same event.³ Ghelderode who, it seems, went in for every non-naturalistic contrivance, could hardly have resisted the most stylized of them all. He shares his enthusiasm for puppetry with two of his immediate forebears, Alfred Jarry and Maurice Maeterlinck, both of whom wrote puppet plays, and both of whom

¹Roland Beyen, "Les goûts littéraires de Michel de Ghelderode," p. 58; Francis, L'éternel aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode, pp. 122-129, 266-268; Jans, p. 35.

²Chesnais, p. 14.

³Ibid., p. 17.

strove to overcome the banality of naturalism.¹

Notwithstanding David Grossvogel's opinion to the contrary, Duvelor's aim is not purely that of light entertainment.² It contains social satire on unhappy marriage and on the hypocrisy of the clergy. Its humor is the blackest, and it is no less an apocalyptic vision than is Ubu Roi, whose hero Duvelor resembles not just a little. Although Ghelderode indulged his predilection for the macabre in the medium of the puppet play, as in all others; still, he conformed, in other respects, quite closely to the more cheerful puppet stage conventions, which Chesnais lists:

Le langage des marionettes, avant même qu'on l'ait compris, forme à ces pan pans un accompagnement mystérieux de cris, d'exclamations: Oh! Oh! Ah! Ah! graves et retentissants comme les sons de tambour. . . . Voix de perroquet, sifflet, aigres soupirs de clarinette, chocs secs et stridents du bois fendu, folie d'interjections et d'intonations, fureur de bataille, fantastique liberté d'apparitions et disparitions, masques immuables, gestes bouffons et violents, . . . casseroles, fusils, sabres, parapluies monumentaux. . .³

Duvelor opens violently as Melanie attacks. Duvelor: "Bif. . . . Baf. . . . Bif. . . . Baf! Bad, bad devil." The entrances and exits are liberal and arbitrary: the dead are summarily shut up in the basement and Lucifer and his little devils pop right up out of the floor. Their final recession is accompanied by lightning, thunder, and the cacophony of "tin-pan music."

¹Ubu Roi's first incarnation was as a puppet play, as were Princess Maleine's and The Blind's; Chesnais, p. 27.

²Grossvogel, p. 293.

³Chesnais, pp. 25-26.

Resembling both the medieval farce as well as the puppet play,¹ characters are simplified, distilled human beings, each representing a single force with an unchanging, legible intention.² They are cousins to the commedia figures, Duvelor to Pantalone (and Harlequin in his mischievousness) and Melanie to Colombine.

All gesture in this play is broad and farcical: Lepisser, the grocer, pulls Duvelor by the feet to get him to die faster, only to have the odious devil fall down and crush him.³ Duvelor marries his former wife and her intended with a simple, "Plick - Pleck - Plack." The grotesque and the childlike are married along with Melanie in Ghelderode's puppet theatre.

And, as has been pointed out earlier, all the short one-act plays bear the stamp of the puppet-puppeteer relationship, evidenced in contrived, artificial forms. The arbitrary use of entrances, the verbal patterns, the spare structures (examined in chapter 1 of this study), all native to the puppet stage, find their way into plays intended for human actors as well.

Mime

Mime is a highly codified art form, whose craftsmen learn the most conventionalized of skills. Perfection of craft in this form comes with

¹Suzanne Lilar, The Belgian Theatre Since 1890 (New York: The Belgian Government Information Center, 1958), p. 6.

²Arnott, p. 77.

³This is a standard lazzo from the commedia tradition. Duvelor, in this case, is a stand-in for Harlequin; Joan Lawson, Mime: The Theory and Practice of Expressive Gesture (New York: Dance Horizons, 1957), p. 157.

the greatest achievement of accuracy in replicating predetermined mime gesture.¹ "SPEED! ECONOMY! SCENIC IMAGES! Such is the triple contribution of the Mime."² So speaks Jean Dorcy, one of the foremost mime instructors of the twentieth century. In the two plays which employ the conventions of mime most fully, Ostend Maskers and Dreams Drowning, these imperatives are followed to the letter. Ghelderode plots out the most simplified stage directions, for without words, communication with the audience can be effected only by the broadest, most universal of gestures.

The movements in Ostend Maskers, though rooted in the Vermin's emotional and sensory life, convey extreme exaggeration and simplification of these states, whether they be drunkenness, fatigue, romantic infatuation, despair, or determination. Since Ghelderode cannot rely on words, the activities of musing and meditation, to interest and communicate with the audience, must be brief and strong. "Stage-time in the mime world involves the elimination of the superfluous. . . ."³ Jean Dorcy, in describing his art, frequently compares it to a short condensed play;⁴ and Percival Wilde encouraged the use of mime as a means of economizing on action in the one-act play.⁵

¹Ibid., p. vii.

²Jean Dorcy, The Mime, trans., Robert Speller and Pierre de Fontnouvelle (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1961), p. 14.

³Lawson, p. 33.

⁴Dorcy, p. 33.

⁵Wilde, p. 133.

Like other stylized art forms, mime was maimed by the advent of naturalism.¹ And, as Ghelderode hopes, in the Preface to Ostend Maskers, the revival of the art of mime might be implemented with the assistance of such non-naturalistic practitioners as himself. Mime, an art form which saw its heyday in the middle ages, is perfectly compatible with Ghelderode's taste and sensibility.

Mime allows for supernatural elements, such as the appearance of the Nymph of the Fountains through the wall, and the inclusion of such of Ghelderode's favorite stock figures from the medieval stage as Death, the Devil, and Pantalone from whom the Vermin descends.² Ghelderode also uses a kind of ballet, executed both by the Nymph of the Fountains and the Three Harridans, another traditional contrivance of the mime.³ The entrance of the townspeople at the end of Ostend Maskers is quite conventional and thoroughly Ghelderodian at the same time. It was customary for

a procession of people disguised by masks, bust-heads, or discolored faces . . . to enter their neighbors' houses to dance or play at dice -- often in complete silence.⁴

The mime is useful in Drowned Dreams because it grounds an exotic, experimental play in something recognizable. The mimed gestures which, in the stage directions, approach slapstick intensity, are familiar

¹Dorcy, pp. 1-3.

²Allardyce Nicoll, Masks, Mimes, and Miracles: Studies in the Popular Theatre (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), p. 189.

³M. Willson Disher, Clowns and Pantomimes (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 263.

⁴Enid Welsford, The Court Masque: A Study in the Relationship between Poetry and the Revels (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), p. 20.

relics which offset the general strangeness of the work. They also provide theatricality to a play which would otherwise be more like a piece of declaimed poetry; the bulk of the play's visual spectacle resides in the mimed action.

Clowns and the Circus

Yet another popular entertainment which took root in the middle ages (but bloomed in the nineteenth century), and to which Ghelderode had recourse, is the circus. And though it is used as a satirical mask for his commentary on revolution, in Transfiguration in the Circus, yet the Belgian playwright is quite faithful to the rules and regulations on which it is based.

The sometimes pathetic figure of the clown, embodying both the idealist and the fool, is a perfect disguise for Ghelderode's hapless hero. The circus is also a distancing metaphor for Ghelderode's typical, "world in the process of dissolution and estrangement,"¹ in which logical progression is obliterated and which ends in Armageddon. The arbitrary large and small peaks of action Ghelderode imposes are conveniently realized by classical clown tomfoolery, as described by Bergson:

. . . the clowns came and went, collided, fell and jumped up again in a uniformly accelerated rhythm, visibly intent upon effecting a crescendo. And it was more and more to the jumping up again, the rebound, that the attention of the public was attracted.²

Transfiguration in the Circus is a comperdium of classic circus lazzi which are equated with the customary stages of revolution as Ghelderode sees them. For instance, the play repeats over and over

¹Kayser, pp. 43, 63.

²Bergson, p. 98.

again the prototypical comic situation of the hero who lays a trap in which he is the first to be caught.¹ Both the Manager and Mister Clown get shot by the trick gun with which each thought to kill the other. Luna is the focus of the plot that all the clowns hatch to outwit the others. Each in turn is caught in the trap of disillusionment she sets, even August, who appears to be the cleverest of the lot. And the final action of the play is constructed on this rhythm as well. Mister Clown intends to regain control over his situation by bringing about the end of the world with a bomb explosion. His trick holds within it his own downfall, however, for who should explode from the bomb to conduct their own massacre (including that of Mister Clown), but his adversaries, the Manager and Luna.

The Soviet Small Encyclopedia of Circus cites other standard clown conventions, such as eccentric acts, most of which can be found in Transfiguration in the Circus:

An artistic device for pointedly comic portrayal of reality, consisting of intentional violation of logic, sequentiality, and interdependence among the events portrayed and of the alogical (from the point of view of generally accepted norms) behavior of the characters, with the result that the occurrences appear as though displaced from their usual positions and receive unexpected shifted meanings. . . . The eccentric performer by the seeming illogicality and absurdity of his actions, presents happenings in an unexpected light, exposing their hidden truth (for example, the comic portrays a man who publicly repents the mistakes that he has made and beats himself on the breast; then leaving the platform, the "orator" pulls out from his chest a metal tray with a pillow attached to it, which has protected his chest from the blows). After a series of logical actions, there can follow a final displacement, which shows the senselessness of all that has gone before (for example, the performer carefully cleans his jacket, blows the

¹Ibid., p. 122.

dust off it, and then suddenly spreading it out on the ground, wipes his feet on it).¹

Consonant with the above description there is a series of deaths in Transfiguration in the Circus which do not hold for very long. The first is that of Mister Clown who after announcing, "I am dead," raises his frame and requests a brighter funeral march from the bandleader. The next is the Manager's death, which is followed by his surreptitious resurrection and escape. Mister Clown fails to observe the latter incident, which results much later in his own downfall. After a particularly frightful melee, the clowns fall down in succession and dissolve in a flood of tears. August shouts, "Silence! You're all knocked out!" The clowns cooperate and go stiff, followed by an instantaneous revival on August's exit. They attempt and succeed in a mass suicide by tickling each other's feet, but immediately wake up when real danger, Mister Clown's bomb, makes an appearance. The action of the dead coming back to life coincides exactly with Ghelderode's taste for the macabre, which takes the same form (the resurrection of the dead) in a number of non-circus one-acts (e.g., Hamlet's Grief, Duvelor, Ostend Maskers, The Magpie on the Gibbet, and many of his full-length plays as well).

Other lapses of logic and sequentiality include the routine, "Mister Clown doesn't want to work," which in clown logic entails a very literal interpretation of doing nothing, akin to Buddhist meditation: an eternal, static present. August demands that they "take a break" from the oppressive inactivity. They resolve to read the manifesto

¹Quoted in: Daniel Gerould, "Eisenstein's Wiseman," The Drama Review (Vol. 18, no. 1, March, 1974), pp. 71-72.

after the revolution is over, thus violating its integral necessity, or pointing up its superfluity. The clowns characteristically wail about the shock that struck them in the heart when they have been kicked in the derriere. The inscrutability of clown logic is very much like that dictators use. Mister Clown exults, "Long live liberty and liberated clowns," while shaking his billy club at his subjects, assuring instant assent.

Bergson speaks of other comic rhythms, such as, "a great cause resulting in a small effect," and the literal understanding of a figurative intent,¹ both used in this play. The first cranking of Mister Clown's big bomb, constructed to blow them all to kingdom come, produces but a slight pop. Starting from the premise that "revolutionary manifestoes are declarations of love," the clowns end by thinking that Luna is the revolution. They equate a kick in the behind with the shock of love. "I'm sick at heart," moans Casimir, holding his posterior. Since revolutions set the world on its head, the clowns resolve to stand on theirs.

The radio apparatus Mister Clown wheels out has precedent in circus tradition, as can be seen in the similar device used by the British clown, Harry Tate:

In "Broadcasting," the public's passion for wireless apparatus is expressed in terms of ironmongery. An umbrella, a pail, a tea-pot, a tinker's barrow and stock of pans are solemnly attached to a "four-and-sixpenny listening-in set," while the jargon of radio-telephony is discussed.²

The various names Ghelderode assigns his clowns are classical

¹Bergson, pp. 116, 135.

²Disher, p. 180.

clown titles, Mister Clown and Auguste, especially. Gustave was the name of the first Fratellini brother,¹ although Mister Clown as dictator is once again a descendant of Pa Ubu. The jobs Mister Clown hands out to his cohorts correspond to categories of clown-types of the Gurevich Circus System, which include the musical clown and the carpet clown.² Cuckoldry was a typical circus episode, as was the idea of saturnalia, in which the servants become masters.³ Lucien Godard, in fact, staged and played in a clown revolution in his own circus.⁴

All these conventions are generously laced with a plethora of sudden falls, blows, kicks, and somersaults, a series of which express Mister Clown's jubilation at his success as a revolutionary. Transfiguration in the Circus is situated squarely in the tradition of the circus and knockabout physical face, a genre which minimizes the necessity for long speeches, trims the action down to essentials, and has nothing whatever to do with naturalistic drama.

Fairy Tale

The fairy tale has been called by Friedrich Schlegel, "absolute chaos and infinite association and meaning."⁵ Its nightmare and dream

¹Disher, pp. 196-197.

²Cited by Hovey Burgess, "The Classification of Clown Techniques," The Drama Review (Vol. 18, no. 1, March, 1974), p. 67.

³Disher, p. 41.

⁴Ibid., pp. 199-200.

⁵Marianne Thalmann, The Romantic Fairy tale: Seeds of Surrealism, trans. Mary Corcoran (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), p. v.

possibilities appealed to Ghelderode, as did the universality of its appeal and comprehensibility.¹ He frequently employed elements and moods from fairy tales, although he could not be said to have written fairy tale plays outright.² Two of the one-acts, Rainbow and Caroline's Household, embody rather contrasting fairy tale moods.

One of Ghelderode's brightest plays, Rainbow explains its miraculous title event as the result of coitus between Sun and Rain, personifications of the natural phenomena. Set in the hyperbolic, fairy tale domain of the sky, Ghelderode's rainbow consists, in fact, of multi-colored chorus girls. In the same society as these humanized pigments are an angel, the procurer who arranges the big event, and two miniature human beings, Father John and Petronelle (whose name is apparently a typical one for a shepherdess).³ All these figures are from the fairy tale domain, improbable living metaphors for the forces they represent.

The nature of each character is determined by the emotional response human beings have to that particular phenomenon. Sun is depicted as an aging movie star, sun-spots and all. He is expansive and

¹Here, as elsewhere, Ghelderode followed the lead (probably consciously) of Maurice Maeterlinck who frequently used fairy tale modes in such plays as Pelléas and Mélisande, The Death of Tantalus, and Princess Maleine, among others.

²Susanne Langer points out that, "Legend and myth and fairy tale are not in themselves literature (in any case); they are not art at all, but fantasies; as such, however, they are the natural materials of art." Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 274. Seen in this light, the fairy tale is a different sort of form from either the pantomime, the circus, or the puppet play. It is a world of hyperbolic possibilities, rather than a literary or dramatic genre.

³Helen Cooper, Pastoral, Mediaeval into Renaissance (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), p. 54.

jolly. Rain is gray and miserable. Each color is in the mood stereotypically associated with it. The shorthand spares Ghelderode from detailed character development, the only more complex character being the Angel, who, as master of ceremonies, dominates the proceedings.

Ghelderode uses the fairy tale as a formal excuse for pornography. The four lovers are as sexually agitated as can be, and the urgency of their need provides the energy for a swift and strong climax.

Caroline's Household comes out of a different fairy tale tradition whose most famous representative is E. T. A. Hoffmann. Hoffmann's influence (which Ghelderode acknowledged)¹ is evidenced particularly in the transformations of the dummies and in the magical powers they seem to exert.²

The atmosphere is spooky--nighttime at the carnival--and Borax complains of a spell being cast on all the stall-keepers, caused, he claims, by "liquids" his dummies have been manipulating; he frets that their insolent defiance of natural laws is ruining his business. He, the cruel tormentor of the dummies, evidently dreams his own punishment into being. For his mind apparently and unwittingly breathes life into the unfortunate dummies.³ An even-handed justice which operates in fairy tales, metes out his capital reward.

Kayser describes this occurrence as it appears in the fairy tales

¹Beyen, "Les goûts littéraires de Michel de Ghelderode," p. 36; Weiss, p. 59.

²Kayser, p. 69.

³"... the estranged world appears in the vision of the dreamer of daydreamer or in the twilight of transitional moments." Ibid., p. 186.

of the German Romantics:

. . . the lifeless, mechanical sphere enters the animated and organic one and thereby alienates our world . . . if [the mechanical figures] gained a life of their own and exchanged their world for ours. This is a motif which the Romantics (Hoffmann, Jean Paul, Arnim) subsequently exploited. . . .¹

Ghelderode further mixes realms by introducing fictional characters who have entered the realm of reality, Pierrot, Columbine, and Harlequin. They, like the dummies, having been brutalized by the hard, cold human world, participate in Borax's debacle, though a bit less willingly than the mannequins.

Blockheads, too, contains a fairground atmosphere, and its dummies, as confronted by the Poet, take on human characteristics, even to the point of audibly laughing at him. Venus is like the twentieth century ad infinitum consequence of the fairy tale. Cruelty goes much further, since the nightmare has become the mode in which modern times are lived. In its universality and propensity for cruelty, elements of the Hoffmannesque fairy tale find a welcome home in the Ghelderodian one-act.

Pastoral

"Pastoral, perhaps more than any other mode or form of literature, is a matter of tradition, of authority and model and influence, and no work can be understood in isolation."² Adrian and Jusemina is the only one-act in this group in which the chosen form is not undermined in some way. Ghelderode remains true in practically every respect to the received traditions of the pastoral. Although a departure for him, in

¹Ibid., p. 195.

²Cooper, p. 1.

that the grotesque element is absent, the pastoral is yet another non-naturalistic formal mode which knew its greatest popularity in antiquity, the Renaissance. Its predictable contours and characters obviate any need for introduction and preclude originality (or undiscipline) of structure.

The prototypical conflict between court and country is integral to the play's action. Derived from the legend of Daphnis and Chloe, the story of a pseudo-shepherd and shepherdess who turn out to be long-lost noblechildren, Adrian and Jusemina's title figures are true to type, as is Eglon, a figure like Corydon, "churlish with rough skin and untidy hair,"¹ spurned by womankind. In this play he doubles as Cupid, otherwise known as Love, the emotion which infuses all the characters.

Love, in Adrian and Jusemina, is also conventionally portrayed according to the formula for Renaissance pastoral given by Helen Cooper:

. . . almost invariably rejected, miserable, self-regarding, and if the lover -- or lovers, for the plots are usually sustained by a multiplication of such unhappy love stories -- do finally win their mistresses, it is due to supernatural intervention or to equally remarkable upheavals of plot.²

The plot upheaval which brings Adrian and Jusemina's meeting about is a contrivance; there is no discernible motivation for Adrian to run off as he does, revealing his identity and bringing about his pairing-off with Jusemina.

There are, as in Guarini's Il Pastor Fido, two major interweaving actions, between Adrian and Jusemina and between Eglon and Fluoresque, and a subsidiary thread involving Cornebelline and Astonifantasius. In

¹Ibid., pp. 31-32.

²Ibid., p. 105.

all three matches, the innamorati start off in a lonely state, disdaining their future partners. The former and latter couples find each other by the end, and resolve their romantic differences amicably. And though Eglon and Fluoresque fail as a couple, owing to a misalliance, both find their appropriate position in the world-at-large by the end. The play which starts in dissonance, ends in harmony.

Ghelderode uses his pastoral with sincere intent as, "an ironic medium for describing human suffering,"¹ a subject with which he is at home. He takes care to provide the authentic details of the genre. The strawberries, honey, and milk which constitute Jusemina's diet are customary; so are her mantle and Adrian's cape, typical shepherd fashions. The appliances, a flute for him and a crook for her, their sheep, the season (spring, of course), the idyllic landscape (a garden, the best realization of court and country, being both artificial and natural), are all right out of pastoral tradition.²

The use of oxymoron ("EGLON - You're burning and you're chilly.") is similar to the, "hot ice," invoked in the Renaissance pastoral, Aminta, by Torquato Tasso. Adrian and Jusemina mock each other with word-play and insults:

ADRIAN - 'Ods blood, if it isn't the shipherdess. And your shep, my beauta, are they yieldin' a profit to ya?

JUSEMINA - A problem they are, shipherd. My eye, they go ba-ah so stupidly.

ADRIAN - As a master, so her subjects. You know I'm marrying that tailed star.

JUSEMINA - Damn! I'm marrying Eglon, the virgin.

¹Ibid., p. 4.

²Ibid., pp. 56, 66-67.

ADRIAN - Not flesh, not fish; so young that he wants to suck on you.

JUSEMINA - And your lovely comet's really caught on fire.

ADRIAN - Go graze on the green!

JUSEMINA - Go munch on the grass! Ba-a-a!

ADRIAN - Ba-a-a!

And they earn sufficient wisdom by the end to coin moral epigrams:

ADRIAN - Quite mad is the one who pursues that which flees!

JUSEMINA - To love a fixed star, try again, but a star errant. . . .

Although there is no satyr to fright the lovers, the bestiary does boast a peacock, a unicorn, as well as a comet. Apart from a scarcity of declarations of love, the playwright has refrained from taking liberties with the pastoral tradition. As with the portraits of Adrian and Jusemina that David Grossvogel found so atypically naïve and unblemished for Ghelderode,¹ this play is unusual for him in every way, though it does conform to his non-naturalistic bent and to the requirements of the one-act form.

The Medieval Mystery Play

Evidence of the influence of medieval drama in Ghelderode's work is too pervasive to account for here and has, in any case, been covered in depth elsewhere.² It is within the compass of this study merely to point out the sources for certain dramaturgical devices as they apply to the short one-acts, without duplicating the work others have done.

The medieval mystery play, though cosmic in metaphysical scope,

¹He was writing of the same characters as they appear in La Balade du Grand Macabre; Grossvogel, p. 279.

²See: Castro, *passim*; Collins, *passim*; Marguerite Jost, "La Vision du Monde Medieval dans le théâtre de Michel de Ghelderode" (University of Utah, 1973), *passim*.

was circumscribed in dramatic form. And despite the fact that an entire work lengthened into a three-day cycle, its components were compact units which stuffed the universe into a very tight time. The plays had what O. B. Hardison calls, "sliding time,"¹ so that a monumental action was often played in a short time and limited space.

Suffice it to say that medieval traces are everywhere in Ghelderode's short one-acts, although only four have an explicitly medieval form: The Women at the Tomb, The Massacre of the Innocents, La Mystère et la Passion de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, La Tentation de Saint-Antoine, and La Grande tentation de Saint-Antoine. The Massacre of the Innocents (to use this play as a paradigm for the rest of them, as they are all quite similar) is what today would be called cinematic, jumping randomly from episode to episode, regardless of temporal or spatial unities. Chesnais records a scene from a traditional Belgian nativity play, which incorporates the same clipped diction, jocular, almost sophomoric tone, and many of the same episodes found in Ghelderode's.² So although Ghelderode's Bible plays may not be actual reconstructions of medieval mystery plays, as Ghelderode claims in the plays' foreword, and which Roland Beyen challenges,³ they do contain enough correspondences to them to merit such an appellation.

The episode which gives The Women at the Tomb its title derives from a passage in Mark 16:6:

¹O. B. Hardison, Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p. 57.

²Chesnais, pp. 90-92.

³Beyen, Michel de Ghelderode ou la Hantise du Masque, pp. 178-182.

When the holy women presented themselves at the sepulcher of the Lord, they found that the spirit had returned to the body, and there was the vision of the angels at the tomb, and they announced to the apostles what they had seen.¹

Ghelderode chooses the action before the women (whom he has taken the liberty of increasing to twelve in number) resolve to present themselves at their Lord's grave, rather than the biblical incident proper. The biblical story hovers in the air; the audience presumably has an expectation of the event that is coming. And when the incident itself was enacted in the quem queritas play, one of the earliest dramatic outgrowths of the liturgy, it was understood that the emptiness of the tomb, rather than the animated body of the savior, conveyed the idea of resurrection.² Similarly, in The Women at the Tomb, Christ's fresh absence accentuates his effect on the women he knew, and it elicits remarkably non-Christian behavior from them.

Hardison, who contends that the mystery play was actually a form of worship and so, inseparable from the Mass itself, describes the Introit ceremonies as a kind of "frame drama" for the Mass, functioning in a manner similar to the framing devices Ghelderode uses. They heighten the symmetry which was as conventional in the Mass as it is in Ghelderode's one-acters.³

Various aspects of the Mass and the liturgical drama can be detected throughout these plays, although a more immediate source, Maurice Maeterlinck, who in turn drew from the Mass, should also be

¹Quoted in Hardison, p. 72.

²Ibid., p. 141.

³Ibid., pp. 48, 276.

considered. Here, as elsewhere, Ghelderode followed the precedent of the symbolists, who had resuscitated and popularized medieval forms, particularly the medieval mystery play.¹ The Mass is static; it exists outside of time in what Hardison calls, "the absolute present," just as the medieval drama is enacted in a, "timeless present and unlocalized space."² Is not the static quality characteristic of many of these plays? And this concept of a timeless present applies to all the plays set in the twilight land mentioned earlier, as does that of the unlocalized, flat spaces in which the plays are set.

Grace Frank notes that the characters in medieval drama, "are in general differentiated as types rather than as persons; they frequently address each other in balanced phrases built on similar verbal and rhythmic patterns . . . a formalism results. . . ."³ Both the features of rhythmic, responsorial language and generic characterization have been noted earlier in this study.

More specific parallels yet may be seen. The Sponsus, a play about the Wise and Foolish Virgins, may very well be a source for The Old Men, Piet Bouteille, The Strange Rider, and The Blind Men. Whether Ghelderode actually knew it or not is uncertain, but the correspondence it shares with these plays is noteworthy. The Sponsus contains two character groupings, the general mode of character distribution in the above four plays. One group, called the Fatue (whom the old people and

¹Roger Bodart, Maurice Maeterlinck (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1962), pp. 55, 68.

²Hardison, pp. 82, 271.

³Grace Frank, The Medieval French Theatre (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 87.

the blind men resemble), though urged to be vigilant for the coming of the Bridegroom (who symbolizes Christ), fall asleep. They are juxtaposed to the Prudentes (like Piet, Madeleine, Jef, Barbara, the Watchman, and Lamprido), who stay alert for his coming and are rewarded by a trip to Heaven. The Fatue are led right to Hell.¹ The coincidences of character technique, theme, and retributive justice between the medieval play and Ghelderode's are too startling to ignore.

It has been demonstrated earlier that Christ, or a Christ-like embodiment, is, at bottom, the central character in many of these plays. He is omnipresent, though offstage, in Blockheads. The dummies and harlequins in Caroline's Household suffer as he did. Pantagleize in The Public Life of Pantagleize, Lamprido in The Blind Men, and the condemned man in The Magpie on the Gibbet are misunderstood as He was. Ghelderode has stated on numerous occasions, gaining a reputation accordingly, that he was a lover of the middle ages and wrote on medieval subjects. Some of his best known plays, such as Miss Jairus, The Chronicles of Hell, Escurial, and Red Magic, are redolent with the medieval Flemish atmosphere for which the playwright is best known. Examples of this affinity between author and period could inspire several entire other works, and indeed have.

Agon

An entire tradition in theatre is based upon a pattern of debate.² Beginning with ancient Greek theatre, and continuing at least through

¹Ibid., p. 589.

²Beckerman, p. 21.

Ibsen, plays are constructed either blatantly or covertly on debate.

In The Public Life of Pantagleize Ghelderode uses a particular debate rhythm as an armature for Pantagleize's surrealist antic's. This pattern is akin to that used by Sophocles in Oedipus Rex, Aeschylus in Prometheus Bound, and Ibsen in Brand. The central figure is visited by peripheral characters who offer opposing or complementary views to his own.

While the people who visit the classical heroes are usually trying to deter them from an active course upon which they are hell-bent, Pantagleize's visitors are trying to engage him in some course of action, any course in fact. Pantagleize receives four such visits, each of which reveals another facet of his noncommittal stance and whimsical character.

So while Pantagleize is an exponent of nothingness, and frivolous nothingness at that, the progress of his drama depends upon a highly rational and conventionalized structure. The series of debates gives the play an identifiable, even classic rhythm, sets temporal limits for it, and deposits Pantagleize right in the center of the stage, a position from which he flees at the end.

Maeterlinck

When asked which modern dramatist had exerted the greatest influence on him, Michel de Ghelderode replied:

Maeterlinck's mysterious and supernatural drama gripped . . . He taught me that dramatic art is not only physical but not physical. . . . He talked to me about what he called "The Deeper Life" and I've never forgotten what he said. Many of his ideas have

become mine. We both believe that creation does not stop with man, that we are surrounded by invisible beings who are superior to us.¹

Ghelderode's short one-acts not only subsume Maeterlinck's metaphysical viewpoint, but his formal techniques as well, a connection which has not escaped several of his critics.²

Maeterlinck's earlier plays, The Blind (1890), The Intruder (1890), and The Interior (1894), were christened "static dramas" by their author, and dramas of silence, darkness, and the dream by others.³ They had none of the trappings audiences had grown to expect from the theatre of Zola and Ibsen. As Anna Balakian has remarked on symbolist drama, of which school Maeterlinck was the most celebrated practitioner:

If there is an impression of an absence of crisis in these plays, it is because the crisis is in truth ever-present, and that the continuous presence must be conveyed by a high pitch of sensitivity rather than by action or by the dynamics of emotion. The creation of intense inner vibrations is as intangible as the power of human personality itself.⁴

Rhythmic intricacies of sound and word in conjunction with strong visual images are substituted for character development, plot interest, and social commentary.

¹Quoted in: Samuel Draper, "Michel de Ghelderode: A Personal Statement," Tulane Drama Review (VIII, no. 1, Fall, 1963), p. 43.

²Francis, L'éternel aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode, pp. 111, 155; Jean Mogin, "Esquisse pour un portrait," Marginales (Brussels, nos. 112-113, May, 1967), pp. 10-11; Camille Poupeye, "Michel de Ghelderode, Poète dramatique tourmenté et visionnaire," Empreinte (no. 6, Dec., 1949-Jan., 1950), p. 114; Raymond Trousson, "L'oeuvre et les thèmes de Michel de Ghelderode," Le Flambeau (nos. 9-10, Nov.-Dec., 1960), p. 659; Beyen, Michel de Ghelderode ou la Hantise du Masque, p. 115; Beyen, "Les goûts littéraires de Michel de Ghelderode," pp. 147-149; and the only attempt of a critic to conduct a formal analysis of these correspondences, Beyen, Ghelderode, pp. 10-15.

³Knapp, p. 9.

⁴Anna Balakian, The Symbolist Movement: A Critical Appraisal (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 126.

The equally weighted formal dialectic in Ghelderode's plays is summed up in Jean de Cock's observation:

symbolisme mystique et expressionisme halluciné sont les formes extrêmes et complémentaires de l'art et de l'humanisme belgo-flamand.¹

The similarities and disparities between Maeterlinck and Ghelderode become apparent through a close comparison of Maeterlinck's short one-acts, with Ghelderode's The Blind Men, The Old Men, and The Strange Rider.

Both Maeterlinck and Ghelderode wrote a play entitled Les Aveugles (Maeterlinck's title has been translated as The Blind and Ghelderode's as The Blind Men), and the common titles signal a deeper thematic and formal resemblance. The Blind and The Blind Men are brief metaphorical images of man's condition. In both, the characters are masses of people (in The Blind Men, a smaller mass than in The Blind) presented with a plan for finding a physical and metaphysical way out of danger, which they reject, and this rejection leads directly to the revelation of death which ends the plays. The rejection and its consequences arise, in each play, from the disparity between the objective truth of the situation and what the blind believe it to be.

In The Blind the dead priest is in many ways a savior--he lives in light and attempts to lead the blind to a lighted place by showing them a path. They, being ordinary men, swathed in illusions, refuse to hear him. We learn that the priest, sensing his own impending death, intends to bring his charges to a lighthouse, but is stricken en route,

¹Jean de Cock, Le Théâtre de Michel de Ghelderode (Paris: Editions A. -G. Nizet, 1969), p. 16.

on the island where the asylum is. Along the way the priest informs them of the way back to the monastery; they neglect to listen. He also, in diverse ways, has warned them that he would not be living much longer; they ignore him and later malign him for not having warned them. In the home, the blind live in darkness, while the priest inhabits a brightly-lit tower room. The blind are paralyzed with fears which prevent them from moving, and lay the blame for their present desperate condition on the priest. Throughout they are under the false assumption that there is hope for them, although they have rejected whatever actual redemption might have been, but is no longer, available. Their major error lies in their belief that the priest has deserted them, while in point of fact, he has died in their midst.

The sightless group in The Blind Men also lives under a misconception. They believe that they are approaching the Holy Land of Rome (which they interpreted as a higher spiritual place, as is the lighthouse in The Blind); in actuality they have not left their native Flanders, but have been circling the area for weeks, trampling over the same ground repeatedly. They, like Maeterlinck's blind people, imagine that they can see at times and are sanctimonious and dishonest. Lamprido serves the same dramatic function as the priest, for his sight in one eye makes him somewhat superior to the others. He, like the priest, resides in a high place, in this case up a tree,¹ in order to observe man's behavior better. He doesn't circle, as they do, under

¹A higher spiritual plane and high geographic altitude are generally equated in these works. "I seem to see them from the height of another world, because I know a little truth which they do not yet," remarks the intuitive Grandfather in Maeterlinck's The Interior.

the misconception that they are making progress; rather, he stays in one place, a repository of universal comprehension, and is content with his position. Like the priest, he offers them the objective truth that they have been going in circles and are nowhere near Rome. He also alerts them to the death awaiting them in the treacherous ditches, offering to lead them to the modest protection of an abbey. Preferring the grandiose and imaginary splendor of Rome, they scorn him, and by calling him a cripple, assert their own superiority, but by ignoring his insight and advice, they seal their doom. A comment of Maeterlinck's elucidates the plight of Ghelderode's characters:

Is it not at the very moment when a man believes himself secure from bodily death that the strange and silent tragedy of the being and the immensities does indeed raise its curtain on the stage?¹

In refusing to recognize a true path when they "see" it (they take Christ for one of the thieves),² they resemble Maeterlinck's blind men. This inability to proceed is reinforced implicitly through static action in The Blind and the circular journey in The Blind Men.

While not derived directly from Breughel, The Blind clearly has the same allegorical intent as his famous painting does, and both plays share the tradition of the medieval morality, and are set in an unidentified, though manifestly medieval, time. But, as George Wellwarth

¹Maurice Maeterlinck, "The Tragical in Daily Life," Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski, ed. Bernard Dukore (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974), p. 730.

²Ghelderode enjoys confusing Jesus with one of the thieves or making it ambiguous whether He is Christ or anti-Christ. In Blockheads, for instance, the Poet reveals that it is "the living God" who is the actual thief of love from the hearts of men; He is keeping the universal supply of it for Himself.

has observed, "Breughel's blind men are merely comically ducked in a ditch, but Ghelderode's deliberately turn down an offer of salvation and die."¹ The Blind Men is subtitled a "Morality in One Act after Breughel the Elder." Breughel based his painting, as did Ghelderode his play, on the biblical quotation, ". . . they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind both shall fall into the ditch." (Matthew, XV: 14)²

In addition to the striking similarities of plot and mood, many shared techniques tie the two playwrights together. An emphasis on the uses of silence is one of the most apparent aspects of their works. Indeed, Gianni Nicoletti has described Ghelderode as, "un symboliste / écrivain des silences."³ In addition, sounds play an important part in both Maeterlinck and Ghelderode. In The Blind, praying, the murmur of the sea, breathing, night birds, and church bells serve related functions to the echoes, wailing, laughter, and again bells in The Blind Men. Ghelderode shared the symbolist fascination with bells, remarking:

I hear bells living, breathing, and rambling on. I am a bell fancier. . . . They are a musical sign announcing the intrusion, the imminence of the supernatural, the approach of mystery.⁴

And just as the language of The Blind is composed musically and rhythmically, The Blind Men has its own particular cadences. It begins

¹George Wellwarth, "Michel de Ghelderode: The Theatre of the Grotesque," Tulane Drama Review (VIII, no. 1, Fall, 1968), p. 13.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Gianni Nicoletti, "Dieux et la Poésie dans l'oeuvre de Michel de Ghelderode," Marginales (Brussels, nos. 112-113), p. 115.

⁴Michel de Ghelderode, Quoted in the preface to: Seven Plays, trans. George Hauger (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 6-7.

with a liturgical chant whose rhythms persist in the dialogue; the action ends with, "Amen." The lines come in regular sets of threes, one line for each blind man. And many phrases are internally structured in three, such as, "Miserere! Miserere! Miserere!", "Ha, ha, ha, ha, h^r, ha," and "Our pains, our hunger, our thirst are going to finish."

The setting for both plays are analogous: isolated stretches of land made dangerous by the surrounding waters. Both exterior settings are counterpointed by mention of the off-stage sanctuaries (interiors), the abbey and the lighthouse.

The commanding images in both plays are striking and important. Maeterlinck shows us the blind ranged on either side of the dead priest whose return they anticipate. The audience is visually confronted by the predicament of the blind. In Ghelderode's play their futile circling strikes us visually. In both cases their words contradict what we see. Even though the famous Breughel tableau takes place off-stage,¹ allowing the audience to imagine its enactment, the play has a strong visual life onstage.

Death haunted and fascinated Ghelderode as it did Maeterlinck, and both of their plays with blind people are preoccupied with it. As Lamprido says, "All roads lead to death." In The Blind, death is in their midst, although the characters are unable to recognize it at first. In The Blind Men, death comes to the title characters abruptly at the end of the play. Although warned, they are incapable of avoiding it.

Strong parallels can also be drawn between Maeterlinck's

¹Ibid., p. 16.

The Intruder and Ghelderode's The Strange Rider. Once again, the plays are short. John Henderson has remarked on the absence of action in The Intruder and its evocative use of sounds,¹ both characteristics of The Strange Rider.

The Intruder begins with members of a family waiting for the arrival of a Sister of Mercy, whose visit is necessitated by the illness of the Mother who lies in a bedroom offstage. Strange events transpire: the opening of a door to no visitor perceptible to the five senses, a chilling breeze, footsteps. The members of the family interpret these signs in disparate ways, all based on their approaches to life. Finally the baby, at whose birth the Mother took ill, cries for the first time in its life; simultaneously the Mother dies.

The Strange Rider is also a waiting play; the inmates of an old folks home are passing the time, when the Watchman claims he hears bells. The old folks think him mad and/or a practical joker until they, themselves, hear bells. Their credulity widens when the Watchman, as he looks out the window, elaborately describes the approach of a strange horsewoman, the incarnation of death who, he claims, is on her way to carry one of the old people off. The old people, by turns, dance to welcome death, repent their sins, and try to pray. Death, by the Watchman's report, advances, opens the door, wanders about the house, and rides off again, taking with her a new-born baby. The old people celebrate their escape by doing a grotesque danse macabre "like stiff marionettes."

The Strange Rider and The Intruder, even more than both Les

¹John Henderson, The First Avant-Garde, 1887-1894 (London: Harrap, 1971), p. 98.

Aveugles, are permeated with death, if only because the characters are preparing for it. There is a spiritual dichotomy between the characters both in The Strange Rider and The Intruder. In The Intruder, the insensitive Uncle and Father are attuned only to the visible and tangible, certain of their stability, but spiritually blind. "Oh, the stars -- that's nothing," remarks the Uncle. When the lights go out, they assert that they prefer being in the dark, unwittingly commenting on their spiritual narrowness with this rationalization of an inexplicable event. The Grandfather, on the other hand, hears and senses things which they do not, the scythe being sharpened for instance, and he accurately intuits the darker implications of the gusts of wind and the footsteps. All of nature and inanimate objects respond to the presence of death, but the Uncle and the Father do not.

The old people in The Strange Rider are deaf to the bells the Watchman hears and, at first, scoff at his perceptions. They require his intercession to interpret the sounds of Death breathing, knocking, and playing castanets.

In The Intruder the major offstage characters, the dying woman and the baby to which she gave birth (lying in a different room) are linked. Her death triggers the baby's crying. In The Strange Rider it seems there is a causal link between the old people's escape from death and the child's sacrifice to it; the one karmically balances the other.

In Masterlinck's plays, those who are on the borders of life, the recently born and the very old or dying, are the ones who communicate with the world of mystery, while the middle-aged are deprived of such

acuity. On this phenomenon Maeterlinck has written:

I have grown to believe than an old man seated in his armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him, giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about his house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows and the quivering voice of the light, submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny . . . I have grown to believe that he, motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more human and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress.¹

While Ghelderode sometimes adheres to this convention (e.g., Barbara in The Old Men, Piet in Piet Boutilie), he just as often departs from it, painting the aged in ludicrous, uncomplimentary colors, depicting them as incredulous, hypocritical monsters (e.g., both groups in The Old Men and The Strange Rider).

As before, silence is used extensively, as it is considered a precondition for the intrusion of occult forces.² All the sounds that intervene are intimations of death's approach. Among the sounds in The Intruder are the wind, trees trembling, nightingales, the scythe being sharpened, and the bells of the clock. In The Strange Rider, there are bells, knocking, coughing, blowing, and castanets. In this play, a human form is ascribed to death, whereas it is invisible in Maeterlinck's play.

Again, both plays adhere to the unities,³ start from a late point of attack, have a sense of timelessness, and the characters are unindividualized archetypes. On the other hand, Maeterlinck's play has a contemporary, though stripped-down setting, whereas The Strange Rider is

¹Maeterlinck, p. 729.

²Knapp, p. 42.

³Ibid., p. 43.

once again set in the middle ages. Ghelderode stresses the grossness, blasphemy, and violence of people, characteristics which Maeterlinck disguises behind blue gauze. Maeterlinck, in general, offers sympathetic portraits of human beings as a poor, helpless lot, held in the grip of a cruel destiny. Ghelderode's people are, in addition, just as often foul and eminently deserving of the suffering they undergo. Ghelderode's play includes social criticism of religion and hypocrisy, issues in which Maeterlinck takes no interest.

The verbal patterning used by both playwrights is very similar, with a predominance of cryptic or enigmatic phrases. The following two snatches of dialogue, the first from The Strange Rider, the second from Piet Bouteille, illustrate this tendency:

FIRST OLD MAN: Hey, old beard. Did you hear that?

WATCHMAN: No. What did you hear?

FIRST OLD MAN: Bells, in the devil's name, bells!

And:

MILLE: Who's coming?

BELOKE : Don't know. Well.

MILLE: What?

The rhythms of the above passages remind us of those in The Intruder:

UNCLE: What shall we do while we are waiting?

GRANDFATHER: Waiting for what?

UNCLE: Waiting for our sister.

Death is in the ellipses and in between the lines. Roland Beyen remarks on the, "syncopated delivery," of the characters in Piet Bouteille,¹ a feature that Maeterlinck liberally puts to use.²

¹Beyen, Ghelderode, p. 12.

²Knapp, pp. 9-10.

So close is the kinship between the two playwrights that their characters speak lines that are almost identical. Barbara (from The Old Men) despairs that the old men, "are repeating it [the Lord's Prayer], and they don't understand," as Mary in Maeterlinck's The Interior observes that the unwitting family of the dead child, "were praying without knowing what they did." The Interior also uses a split stage, one side silent on which the actors communicate mimetically, the other physically static, but the characters there narrate the action, a technique Ghelderode adopts in Dreams Drowning.

In fact, Maeterlinck's legacy infuses Ghelderode's entire oeuvre, though often manifested in more diluted forms than these examples just cited. Ghelderode's propensity towards stasis is a general feature of his work; many of the one-acts (particularly Hamlet's Grief, The Women at the Tomb, A Night of Pity, Blockheads, Piet Bouteille, Drowned Dreams, Rainbow, Adrian and Jusemina, and Escurial) are waiting plays in which a single action is suspended throughout the play or postponed till the end. Maeterlinck, in fact, may be said to have excused Ghelderode from any obligation to traditional use of dramatic incident. Death as the single major event and precipitating circumstance is also part of Maeterlinck's legacy, although Ghelderode surely had a proclivity for that subject with or without Maeterlinck's precedent.¹

¹ Another modern influence Ghelderode acknowledges which can be discerned in the short one-act plays, is that of Leonid Andreev, the Russian symbolist. Beyen, Ghelderode, p. 17; Beyen, "Les goûts littéraires de Michel de Ghelderode," pp. 36, 51. Like Ghelderode, Andreev had an affinity with the circus, which he uses as a setting in He Who Gets Slapped (1906). He, the title character in that play, is a cousin to several of Ghelderode's characters. He is the passive recipient of physical abuse, like Harlequin, Pierrot, and Columbine in

Dada and Surrealism

Anna Balakian, who conducted extensive studies on both schools, posits the theory in The Literary Origins of Surrealism, that Surrealism was an egg that matured in the symbolist womb.¹ This premise furthers our understanding of how Ghelderode could have been proficient in two genres which are so seemingly disparate. Balakian claims that the Surrealists shared with the symbolists a nostalgia for death and a disdain for reason and science ("Reason has betrayed the Mind," was a Surrealist rallying cry.), as well as a contempt for naturalistic forms.²

As with the symbolist strain, Ghelderode's affinity with Dada and Surrealism is nowhere so apparent as in his short plays, whose brevity make them like rough sketches, ideal canvases on which to experiment. The most vivid showcase for Ghelderode's Dadaist and Surrealist tendencies are Venus, Dreams Drowning, and The Public Life of Pantagleize. Ghelderode's relationship with the Surrealist school has been noted, as the following statement by Camille Poupeye indicates, but the most cogent examples of that connection, the one-acts, have gone

Caroline's Household. And, like the Poet in Blockheads, he is a stand-in for Jesus, the deserving scapegoat for all humanity.

In Andreev's play, The Black Maskers (1903), the central figure dreams a flood of guests into being, who change from benign though strange figures, to a nightmare phantasmagoria. The dreamer who elicits an invasion of occult forces is present in the following of Ghelderode's short one-acts: Caroline's Household, A Night of Pity, Ostend Maskers, and Dreams Drowning.

¹Anna Balakian, The Literary Origins of Surrealism (New York: New York University Press, 1966), p. 4.

²Ibid., pp. 6, 13.

unrecognized as such:

La` toutefois où de Ghelderode prend les devants et se détache du groupe Apollinaire, Cocteau et Cendrars . . . c'est dans la conception et dans la signification littéraire de son oeuvre.¹

Gloria Feman Orenstein lists the following as some of the requirements for Surrealism in the theatre:

- (1) Simultaneity, or the negation of chronology and the linear time sequences.
- (2) The dislocation of language from its usual function of communication to one of simultaneous, discrete and interwoven monologues.
- (3) The juxtaposition of new and unexpected elements in a single image or conversation, obliterating the dictates of logic, reason, or chronological time sequence.
- (4) The spiritual climate of rite, ritual, or ceremony.²

The negation of linear time sequences is rampant in Venus, in which de Romeo brandishes a newspaper report of Venus' suicide which was printed before she killed herself. The entire play is based on characters attempting anachronisms which do not stick: Julie, an up-to-date actress, is trying to become a classical statue; de Romeo, a deep-sea diver, orates like a figure "from the Comedie Française," and makes old-fashioned vows, but winds up as a figure of ridicule; the German butcher recites Petronius.

The set of The Public Life of Pantangleize, like that of Jarry's

¹Poupeye, p. 113.

²Orenstein, p. 21. Number two in Orenstein's list needs clarification. The monologues in surrealist drama are themselves often devoid of conventional logic (which is replaced by a less coherent dream logic), and the speeches are not necessarily orated in response to someone else's words or with consideration of an onstage auditor. They are private ventilations.

Ubu Roi on which it is modelled,¹ is predicated upon such blurring of time distinctions, in that it juxtaposes classical referents (an Ionic column and the Acropolis) with the bric-a-brac of modern objects trouvés, canned food, a pipe, and weeds, the type of melange characteristic of the collages of Duchamps and Picabia.

Drowned Dreams compresses time into a dizzy spiral and spills forth a flood of history, which in minutes spins from Atlantis to Lindbergh. And by juxtaposition (the chief means by which the modernist achieves unity),² the play moves from a rational time frame, on the shore, to one which progresses by analogy and dream logic, under water.

All three plays fulfill Orenstein's second requirement of fragmented language. One of the most interesting aspects of Dreams Drowning is the way it is laid out on the page, true to Guillaume Apollinaire's description of his own "Calligramme," "Lettre-Océan" (1914), which, in subject and form, approximates Dreams Drowning:

. . . c'est l'aspect typographique, précisément l'image, soit le dessin. Que cette image soit composée de fragments parlés, il n'importe psychologiquement, car le lien entre ces fragments n'est plus celui de la logique grammaticale, mais celui d'une logique idéographique aboutissant à une ordre de disposition spatiale tout contraire à celui de la juxtaposition discursive. . . .³

Besides the calligramme, Blaise Cendrars (another poet Ghelderode

¹Described in: The Preface to Modern French Theatre, ed. Michael Benedikt and George E. Wellwarth (New York: Dutton, 1964), pp. xii-xiii.

²Roger Shattuck, The Banquet Years: The Arts in France, 1885-1918 (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 332.

³Quoted in: Mary Ann Caws, The Inner Theatre of Recent French Poetry (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 86.

claims as forebear)¹ wrote what he called "poèmes élastiques," whose "structure stretches."² His poems "The Tower" and "Contrast," (1913) recorded below, are surprisingly analogous to Ghelderode's own experiment with word layout:

It's raining electric light bulbs
 Montronge Gare de l'Est subway North-South
 river boats world
 Everything is halo
 Profundity
 In the Rue de Bucy they're hawking l'Intransigent
 and Paris-Sports
 The airdrome of the sky is on fire, a painting
 by Cimabue³

And from Dreams Drowning:

The waters light up
 Cut-outs, fish file past.
 The sea-bed disintegrates:
 Apparitions:
 A Sun, egg-yolk yellow, shines, disintegrates, and
 colors the sea. Play of bubbles, black,
 this time on the yellow sea-bed.

Roger Shattuck speaks of Cendrars's "spiralling images,"⁴ a description equally apt for Ghelderode's play. Language in these works becomes fragmented. "Plasticity" is the key word, engendering freedom from conventional patterns, the removal of logical development, "mosaic style, truncated syntax, cancellation of punctuation." The new plastic poems read like, "lyric telegrams."⁵

¹Francis, L'éternel aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode, p. 367.

²Caws, p. 35.

³Quoted in, Shattuck, p. 339.

⁴He also speaks of, "visualized mental geography." Shattuck, p. 286.

⁵Ibid., p. 315.

As for Venus, it exemplifies Andre Breton's definition of pure surrealist dialogue, as internal monologues that the interlocutors address at, rather than to, each other, each character "pursuing a portion of his inner soliloquy as a response to the other person's questions and answers."¹ The following quotation from Venus exhibits how words have become "corpses of meaning" by the end of the play:²

DE ROMEO -- She owns me completely!

CURTIUS -- Gentlemen . . . I invite you to come visit my collection of erotic stauettes and plesiosauri . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- Save me from this butcher's chops!

DE ROMEO -- From this bacchante's filthy stumps . . .

CURTIUS -- At midnight you have such visions. The only unpleasant part is waking up. Let's cherish these bedtime stories!

Alfred Jarry, the spiritual grandfather of The Public Life of Pantagleize, startled the world with Ubu's exclamation of "merdre." This remark summed up what was to become the Dada rallying cry in a single, cogent syllable. That inspired group of anti-artists nourished themselves on nihilism and negation. Not exactly a far cry from, "Merdre," is Pantagleize's flatulent apostrophe, "PAN," which so dismays and offends the Politicians in The Public Life of Pantagleize. This word, which can be translated as, "BANG"³ was one of the watchwords of the Dada movement.

Tristan Tzara, who specialized in apocalyptic visions analogous

¹Orenstein, p. 19.

²Erich Kahler, The Disintegration of Form in the Arts (New York: George Braziller, 1968), p. 79.

³In my own translation I left it as, "Pan," since that word so beautifully fits the first syllable of our hero's name, and still retains the percussive quality of, "Bang."

to that in Venus,¹ begins one of his "Chroniques zurichoises" with the exclamation, "pan! pan! pa-ta-pan!"² And Clément Pansaers, a fellow Belgian and the link between the Dada movement and Ghelderode,³ wrote a poem, "pan-pan au cul de Nu-Nègre" ("Bang-bang in the ass of the Nude Negro"),⁴ whose form is elastic like those of Apollinaire and Cendrars, and is punctuated regularly with, "pan-pan"s:

Zero is the smallpox
 Burn an O in the flag:
 breathe the magnetism of rags,
 consummation in concentric circles
 bare cubical of the round table.
 Pan-pan!
 Fin-fin
 Pan-pan
 Finale!
 Pan-pan
 o i u a
 pan pan
 Da capo
 Bê
 Pan-pan -- Pan-pan
 Pan-pan
 FIN!⁵

Pansaers is noted for disjointed structure, dream-like rhythms, and

¹Georges Le Maître, From Cubism to Surrealism in French Literature (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), p. 211.

²Quoted in: L'Aventure Dada, ed. Georges Hugnet (Vichy: Editions Seghers, 1971), p. 231.

³Beyen, Michel de Ghelderode ou la Hantise du Masque, p. 111; Beyen, "Les goûts littéraires de Michel de Ghelderode," p. 53; Francis, L'éternel aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode, p. 137.

⁴Negroes again! Many exponents of Dada and Surrealism, including Tzara and Apollinaire, seem to have been obsessed by Blacks, particularly Black boxers. Perhaps the guise of avant-gardism excused the free ventilation of their prejudices. Another explanation may lie in the exotic, free, savage spirit they ascribed to the Black. They may very well have sensed in him an intriguing strangeness and shock value.

⁵Quoted in: Manuel Grossman, Dada, Paradox, Mystification, and Ambiguity in European Literature (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), p. 123.

unexpected associations.¹ Ghelderode transferred the poetic glory of pan-pan to a feasible dramatic context, using it as the embodiment of the play's climax and as the motif for the poems Pantagleize himself composes, as it is in the following one:

Tra la lay
Pan Pan
Boom bim bam
Pan Pan
Tra la lay
Pan Pan

"PAN," as Pantagleize admits, is the summation of, "the crystal clear Pantagleizian opinion," a philosophy which, like Dada, is the expression of "hopelessness," the closest the hero can get to not having a philosophy at all, while preserving a philosopher's pose. His philosophy is also summed up in the, "discrete homage to Jarry," which is a verbal collage of unfinished thoughts, a jewel of bombast compressed in a short, incomprehensible speech, marked off by yawns (Pantagleize's reaction to his own philosophy), and capped off with a doze:

Light me up outside, but inside as well, since I've got to find a definition for pan-pan which I used to consider a dance for the youth of Athens, which lives at night, when it was modestly supposed to be philosophy, a universal vision, a science auxiliary to the powerful and magnanimous pataphysical wisdom of the future (as the omens reveal to me) and of which Western man will say its (He yawns.) necessity inevitably makes itself felt! (He yawns.) The pan-pan is. . . . The pan. . . .

Orenstein's third surrealist precept for the drama, the juxtaposition of new and unexpected elements in a single image or conversation, obliterating the dictates of logic, is also realized in these plays:

The moons twin antennae sweep the set like projectors. Twin volcanoes, from the bottom, artificial fire. Flowers are burning. A

¹Ibid., p. 123.

bell rings. The water becomes brown from the mercury reflections.
Rain of anchors.

Thus reads one of the stage directions in Dreams Drowning, a mélange of weird, nightmare images.

The "spiritual climate of rite, ritual, or ceremony," which Orenstein advances as the fourth requirement of Surrealist theatre, is also responsible for many of the surprising images in Venus. Inspired chiefly by the Comte de Lautréamont's Les Chants de Maldoror, which was one of the Surrealists' guiding documents,¹ Venus both exemplifies Lautréamont's precepts (as they seem to be defined in his Chants) and includes a character who worships both author (Lautréamont or Isadore Ducasse, as he was really called) and hero (Maldoror), Kapman, the German butcher.

Since Kapman, though the normative character in the play, is painted unsympathetically as a brute and cannibal, one hesitates to ascribe his taste to Ghelderode. This doubt is dispelled immediately, since Ghelderode confessed to having loved Les Chants,² and even belonged to an artists' collective called "Le Cabinet Maldoror."³ But more convincing than such external evidence are the intrinsic Ducassian relics included in Venus. Georges Lemaître describes the conditions which prevailed in Europe during and after World War I which engendered the Surrealists' (and Ghelderode's) bizarre works:

¹Le Maître, p. 196.

²Beyen, "Les goûts littéraires de Michel de Ghelderode," p. 135; Francis, L'éternel aujourd'hui de Michel de Ghelderode, pp. 147, 345; Jans, p. 139.

³Beyen, Michel de Ghelderode ou la Hantise du Masque, pp. 164-165.

Religion had become subservient to nationalism; practically everywhere the churches were heard to preach both hatred and slaughter; science was obviously responsible for the most horrible features of contemporary warfare; art and literature had been turned into instruments of propoganda. This was the outcome of centuries of effort towards civilization!¹

In Lautréamont's world principles, values, and ideas are preposterous; absurdity prevails. Maldoror transforms himself into a monster. Discursive logic is replaced by the logic of insanity. Les Chants is a nightmare, an epic of Evil, filled with lurid, violent intensity, cruelty joined with lust, the torture of living bodies, and mutual destruction, all proceeding in a mood of demented frenzy. Irony, ridicule, and satire were modes of artistic response to the agony of life at the time.²

Kapman, the only character in Venus who gets what he wants and whom (by inference) the prevailing order supports, loves Lautréamont. He sings of him as he saws off Venus' arms, and dedicates this dissection, "sweeter than incest," to "Isador -- author of the songs of Maldoror . . ." Kapman is the symbol of carnage and atrocity in the twentieth century who, "in the great war," devoured thirty-seven victims, and avows that the corpse is, "the most noble invention of the century." He is a visionary creation, forecasting the Nazi nightmare of the Second World War.

Kapman is (in concurrence with Orenstein's strictures) the master of rite, ritual, and ceremony as he sharpens his ten blades, and incantatorily invokes, "POU living in the grammars with chou hibou bijou!"

¹Le Maître, p. 156.

²Ibid., pp. 37-41; Balakian, Literary Origins of Surrealism, pp. 69-71.

His orgasm, which is a result of slaughter, in conformity with Lautreamont's pairing of cruelty with lust, is accompanied by his deprecation of the passions of others in the play, since they, "haven't read the songs of Maldoror." He freely laughs at conventionality ("Lovers. Double egotism."), and substitutes for it ready and extreme sadism.

All in all, the world of Venus is a good example of the "hallucinatory vision, the kind which occurs in delirium, in mental illness, under the influence of mind-changing drugs, or on other occasions when the mind is functioning in an altered state of consciousness," a typical surrealist flavor.¹

The version of Venus de Milo, center-stage, "a mannequin selected from a store for hernial bandages and straps," is akin to the Dadaist, Marcel Duchamps' "L.H.O.O.Q." (1919), portrait of the Mona Lisa, whom he furnished with a moustache and goatée, an artful anti-art gesture, mocking the idea of taste and form (in a highly formed medium).² The destruction (or fracturing or transforming) of myths, as Ghelderode undertakes to do in all three of these plays, is a hallmark of his and the Dada/Surrealist schools. As Jean De Cock notes, "Ghelderode dès 1925, contribue à une entreprise . . . de dévoilement, de démystification, de détragification, de démythification. . . ."³

Shock, a related tenet of Dada and surrealism, is also one of

¹Orenstein, p. 27.

²Grossvogel, p. 266; C. W. E. Bigsby, Dada and Surrealism (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972), p. 11.

³De Cock, p. 49.

Venus' (and Ghelderode's) tactics. She wishes to stun the world by appearing nude, and revels in profanity. She wishes, for instance, "thirty-six farts," on the audience and laments that her destiny is "screwed up . . . screwed up!"

The demented frenzy, unleashed from a supposedly unconscious source which accompanies all the carnage (Aspirin, too, has lost his arms, he to the Soviets), trivializes it. With the plethora of entrances and exits, and all the punch and judy clobberings and draggings off, clashing with the "monde évocateur d'une atmosphere d'apocalypse,"¹ the play takes on a farcical tone. True to the Surrealist dicta though, Science, in the person of the archeologist Curtius, is mocked. His jargon has pseudo-technical overtones, and he drops on the scene like a god to rescue them all, but fails ludicrously in the attempt.

The Dealer in Dreams Drowning, likewise, and the Forensic Pathologist in The Public Life of Pantagleize are all agents of the rational, and are summarily debunked; the irrational dream (or even nightmare) is preferable to their inflated positivism. And a highly controlled nightmare is exactly what Ghelderode has created, illuminating a world in which only the amoral butchers find fulfillment, perhaps a vision of the world as Ghelderode sees it, perhaps a recommendation for the abolition of conventional morality.

Venus has another analogue in Apollinaire's short three-act play,

¹Franco Tonelli, L'Esthetique de la Cruauté (Paris: Editions A.-G. Nizet, 1972), p. 97.

The Breasts of Tiresias (1917).¹ As its prologue relates, war has left civilization in a disillusioned, devastated state. Thérèse, Apollinaire's heroine starts, as Julie (Venus) in Venus does, by declaring an end to her past conventional life. "I want to make war and not make children," Thérèse declares, predicting Venus' similarly defiant remark: "Just because they run to distinguish themselves at the front doesn't mean I'm going to bear any children for a nation which doesn't tolerate pretty girls parading around nude!" The offstage male with whom Thérèse is arguing is her husband, just as Julie is contesting angrily with her Director.

And both heroines are re-fashioning themselves after important mythic artifacts of Western culture, Thérèse as Tiresias, Julie as Venus de Milo. Hermaphroditism is a recurrent theme in both plays; the Policeman in The Breasts of Tiresias lusts after Thérèse's husband, and they dance off together, while Kapman longs to cut off Aspirin's legs (and in that way achieve an orgasm by rendering him a quadripalegic!) and tempts de Romeo to come with him to his "Japanese boudoir," a Maldororian cabinet where he plans to "reveal loves to you 'way beyond anything in stupid Eden!"

Jean Cocteau's one-act play, Wedding on the Eiffer Tower (1921) is another Surrealist analogue to Venus and Dreams Drowning, containing elements of both surprise and audacity.² Strange, inappropriate

¹Camille Poupeye (quoted in: Gauchez, pp. 215-216), had noticed Ghelderode's affinity both with Apollinaire and Cocteau; and Beyen, "Les goûts littéraires de Michel de Ghelderode," p. 135, that with Apollinaire.

²Many notable Surrealists, such as André Breton and Roger Vitrac rejected Cocteau's work, since they felt that Cocteau took himself too

characters like the Cyclist are abruptly dropped on the stage, and just as peremptorily withdrawn, as Ghelderode does with Aspirin and Curtius. These chance characters are like the objects trouvés of the period, like the objects in The Public Life of Pantagleize's set.

Cocteau divides his stage as Maeterlinck had done in The Interior, a practice that was becoming more common, in Diaghilev's ballet productions for instance, into mimetic and narrational sides. The common source for this technique may have been Mallarmé, the father of symbolism, who imagined a theatre where mime and poetry would share the same stage.¹ At any rate, it is used in Dreams Drowning; as Ghelderode has divided the printed page in half, so he would have the stage split.

The narrational side would be populated by the Octopus, the mimetic side by the mines. Cocteau employed two phonographs which speak for all the characters, who are silent. Dreams Drowning contains yet another surrealist feature in the Diver. The imaginary voyage is typical of surrealist literature, in which daydreaming is often equated with remote travel. The bed and the ship, in fact, are metaphors which

seriously and succumbed to the traps of commercialism (see Henri Béhar, Roger Vitrac: Un Réprouvé du Surréalisme (Paris: Editions A.G. Nizet, 1966), pp. 47, 50, 54, 74, 88, for an account of the Surrealists' repudiation of Cocteau). However, from our current vantage point in history it is possible to perceive more commonalities than disparities between Cocteau's experiments in Wedding on the Eiffel Tower and those in an orthodox Surrealist work like The Breasts of Tiresias. Schismatic quarrels and in-fighting of the time should be balanced against the internal evidence that the plays themselves offer.

¹Haskell Block, Mallarmé and the Symbolist Drama (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), pp. 83-100.

frequently interact.¹ Such a metaphorical matrix is created in Dreams Drowning.

Conclusions

Ghelderode's short one-act plays clearly embody the tension between certain contradictory impulses: between modernist and medieval forms, between a love for received convention and an urge to violate all sense of order, and between romantic and absurdist sensibilities. The plays, in relation to each other and within themselves, demonstrate these dichotomies. Venus strives towards modernity, while The Massacre of the Innocents is an attempt at reviving the medieval theatre. The Poet in Blockheads, the quintessential romantic anti-hero, confronts a pitiless universe; that self-same universe veers towards self-annihilation in Dreams Drowning. Adrian and Jusemina accurately replicates the most conventional of genres, the pastoral, whereas a play like A Night of Pity defies generic classification, Venus employs a dramatic form which dissolves as it progresses, and a major and sympathetic character like Pantagleize in The Public Life of Pantagleize challenges order wherever he finds it.

Ghelderode was an inheritor of the great romantic tradition.² One man, as in Blockheads, grapples with the universe, a force the spectator

¹Caws, pp. 120-121; Balakian, The Literary Origins of Surrealism, pp. 13-14.

²I am here speaking of romanticism as Wylie Sypher describes it. He notes that, ". . . Schopenhauer spoke for all romantics by reaffirming the self against the res extensa, asserting that the world is my idea of the world, a creation of my own will and idea." The romantic hero's world is subjective. According to Sypher, he is the anti-hero, the rebel against the conventional world and its mores. Wylie Sypher, The Loss of the Self in Modern Art and Literature (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 9-57.

knows only through the hero's subjective view of it. But several of his short works also hint at Ghelderode's affinity with the more recent absurdist movement. In his book, The Disintegration of Form in Modern Art and Literature, Wylie Sypher explores entropy, the physical law which, he claims, is conducting the universe towards chaos and of which modern artists and scientists are becoming increasingly cognizant:

Physicists have had a good deal to say about entropy, a notion that is as anti-romantic as the marketing orientation. In effect entropy is the tendency of an ordered universe to go over into a state of disorder. This is another way of saying that the behavior of things tends to become increasingly random; and in any system tending toward random there is a loss of direction. The universe as we have thought of it from Aristotle to Einstein was a system controlled by laws that produced a cosmos instead of a chaos--that is, the universe was highly structured; but entropy is a drift toward an unstructured state of equilibrium that is total.

The meaning of entropy is illustrated in Boltzmann's theory that with the passage of time there is a gradual transition in nature from the systematic to the random because the universe suffers a leveling of energy until all distinctions are obliterated. The natural order runs down, we say, like an unwound clock, losing its capacity to work. In classical physics it was presumed that the future is like the past, since there are uniform, continuing laws of energy by which things act and react. It is now argued, however, that this continuing operation of uniform laws would rob the future of its very meaning; for the future is not like the past or the present. The future is that in which time becomes effective; and the mark of time is the increasing disorder toward which our system tends.¹

The world, as Sypher sees it being represented in twentieth century literary currents, is so absolutely bleak, hopeless, and diffuse that the individual sensibility of a romantic, such as the Poet in Blockheads, is an irrelevancy, a useless vestigial tail.

In plays like Venus and Dreams Drowning Ghelderode encompasses both the romantic tendency and that described above by Sypher, which achieved

¹Ibid., p. 73.

its fullest development in the plays of Beckett and Ionesco. The dreamers are still there, and their quests continue to obsess them. But the world in which the dreamers strive is crumbling. In these most modern of Ghelderode's works, the playwright, without entirely abandoning the subjective heroics of romanticism, anticipates the world in dissolution that the absurdists live in and continue to depict. The central characters in Venus and Dreams Drowning embark on private quests, while plays in which they find themselves crumble even as their plots advance, like images of Sypher's entropic universe.

There is also, in this fecund and diverse collection of short plays, a discrepancy between the medieval certainty of a perfect prevailing order and the modern suspicion that chaos is impending. While paying tribute to Alfred Jarry's nihilistic vision of the world in The Public Life of Pantagleize, through Pantagleize's ideas and gestures, Ghelderode opts for a precise, dialectical form, and so belies his hero's and his own avowed anarchist sympathies. The same artist who delights in preserving the forms of theatrical antiquity (in Ostend Maskers, Adrian and Jusemina, Duvelor, and Transfiguration in the Circus, for example), also takes the world apart in A Night of Pity. The liquor (in the latter play) which turns to water and consequently runs out altogether, belongs in a class with the painkiller which runs out in Beckett's Endgame. Both are transparent metaphors for the universe tending towards entropy.

Ghelderode participated in the fundamental perplexity common to many artists in the first third of the century, responding to the most basic doubts as to existence and universal order. His plays straddle

the Newtonian world of cause, effect, and perceivable order, and the post-Einsteinian one of an entropic world in which energy and matter are constantly in flux and nothing is certain but death. In some cases these one-act plays may be said to give order to a force such as impending death, which can neither be postponed indefinitely nor understood fully, to correct the universe so to speak, and in other cases to embrace disorder, to objectify it and show it off in a disintegrating form.

CHAPTER III

THREE COMPARISONS BETWEEN SHORT PLAYS AND LONGER ONES

Transfiguration in the Circus and Pantagleize

Both Pantagleize, "un vaudeville attristant," in "three acts, nine scenes, and an epilogue," and Transfiguration in the Circus, a play in one act, present visions of a world in revolution. Both written soon after the Russian Revolution had resolved itself into a semi-totalitarian state, these plays prefigure the multitude of juntas, overthrows, and coups d'états this century has known and satirically reflect the genesis and consequences of the archetypal revolutionary process.¹

Not only is the subject matter common to both plays, but the stages in both revolutions are identical, though ordered somewhat differently. A gesture of defiance starts off the revolution, brings it out from under cover. Mister Clown shoots the Manager, the embodiment of capitalist power, who seems to die, but does not. Leaving unobserved, the Manager returns at the end as the agent of retribution and the victor. Twice Rachel brains Creep, the government agent, and Pantagleize brains him once. He is repeatedly resurrected and also triumphs in the end.

In both plays a manifesto is read, with a similar lazzo leading

¹"Le spectateur qui pensait que Pantagleize était tout simplement une pièce contre la révolution concrète, aussi cruelle, injuste, et entachée d'impureté que la société qu'elle veut démolir." Beyen, Ghelderode, p. 51.

up to it: quarreling over who should deliver it. Assignments of ministries occur in both plays. Unveillings of war machines, in Transfiguration in the Circus, a radio and in Pantagleize a machine gun, signal the revolutions' progress. Scrambling for the principal position in the revolutionary councils, plotting to overthrow the conditional leader and dissension, revolutionary proclamations and subsequent celebrating, theft of the government treasury, abortive and successful attempts at mass annihilation of both the "imbeciles" who populate the world and the revolutionaries themselves, and a final restoration of the previous regime are revolutionary stages in both plays.

Though Rachel Silberschatz, the heroine of Pantagleize, is not a counterspy for the government, as Luna, "the pure equestrian," is, she does become a symbol of the revolution (as does Luna) and its most committed exponent.¹ Luna is referred to as the Revolution, a metaphor she embodies perfectly, since she is also the Revolution's own worst enemy, its downfall. As Pantagleize perceives her, Rachel is also the prize at the end of the conflagration which the most avid revolutionary will receive for his troubles. She is the sensual life, the milk and honey and rainbows the revolution promises to deliver. In each play, when the representative of the exploiters possesses the woman, the revolution is finished. That is, when the dream of the revolution is destroyed, as it is when Creep (presumably rapes and) kills Rachel, when it is coopted, as Luna is by the Manager, the Revolution is no more.

There are both the flavor of the circus and touches of pathos in

¹Although Beyen sees Rachel as, "l'image d'humanité souffrante. . . ." Ibid., p. 54.

either play; they are both "vaudevilles attristants," to use the subtitle of Pantagleize. The shorter play blatantly sports a circus world. Its characters are actual clowns, it is set in the circus ring, and its laws and conventions belong to the circus. It is like a circus saturnalia Barnum and Bailey might stage (with fewer words), albeit in a dramatic context. The circus and vaudeville elements in Pantagleize are somewhat submerged, rising to the surface as occasional lazzi. There is the episode of the semaphoring secret messages, so that Creep, who is present, will be eluded. There is the comic repetition of, "Go to the devil," in the national treasury. And the successive clobberings Creep delivers to all of the members of the revolutionary party are identical to the crownings the clowns give each other in Transfiguration in the Circus.

In fact the entire structure of Pantagleize is built on a comic rhythm Bergson calls, "reciprocal interference of a series," defined as:

A situation [that] . . . belongs to two altogether independent series of events and is capable of being interpreted in two different meanings at the same time. . . . the collision or coincidence of two judgements that contradict each other.¹

The main thread, the revolutionary rallying cry of "What a lovely day" is an accident, a coincidence typical of the way Pantagleize bumbles into the center of the revolutionary activity, which is his "destiny," and continues to bumble until he coincidentally collides with his own death. Death, in the person of Creep, had been stalking him from the start. The revolution is confused in conversation with the eclipse that

¹Bergson, p. 123.

falls on the same day, the revolution also presumably darkening the earth. Pantagleize takes the crown jewels from a general who freely gives them to him, thinking he is someone else.

The overt illogic of the circus has its analogue in Pantagleize, with the sudden, non sequitur appearances of Rachel, with the chaotic planning of the revolutionaries, and the buffoonery of the revolutionaries, the state officials, and Pantagleize himself.

There are elements of pathos in both plays. No one rejoices at a clown's death, and Mister Clown's epitaph, "Absurd clowns, painted clowns. . . ." is poignant indeed, as is the beautiful final image of the clowns floating up by the flies in a bluish light.

Innocenti puts an abrupt stop to the shenanigans as he stands before the court with simple dignity, causing everyone, tribunal and audience alike, a severe pang of anguish at the sincerity with which he tells of his dashed hopes for the revolution. Pantagleize's growing awareness of Rachel's death and the awkward approach to his own death are both calculated to produce tears.

The characters in Pantagleize, though clown-like, are not clowns, and are far more differentiated than those in Transfiguration in the Circus. They have separate identities, albeit allegorical or from the commedia. Whereas the entire military-industrial complex is represented by one person in the shorter work, the Manager, Pantagleize parades a whole retinue of upper-class freaks before us. MacBoom, the bumbling general, is a pompous, incompetent Miles Gloriosus figure, backed by a crew of equally bumbling soldiers. The Generalissimo is the ultimate in pomp and rank, a monument of a person, surrounded by a military court of

dummies. And Creep, on the side of the mighty, is an odious incarnation of death, always around the corner, always on Pantagleize's and Rachel's trails, a recurring nightmare figure.

"You must have made a mistake. It's a clown," the Generalissimo pointedly observes as Pantagleize is brought before the high tribunal. While purportedly a poet and philosopher, Pantagleize is also a sort of modern, existential clown. His own destiny is in the hands of whatever external force takes command of him at the moment, and he cannot even accurately recall what happened to him the moment before. He, like the Poet in Blockheads, is a player strutting and fretting his final hour upon a stage littered with dummies and corpses.

Although this Pantagleize's name and profession are the same as those in The Public Life of Pantagleize, and though Ghelderode writes about them as though they were the same person, they are not identical. The character in the shorter play, like the Sceptic Diogenes, whom he claims as his master and on whom he is based, has stripped himself of all possessions, of all the paraphernalia of a bourgeois life, except his minimal abode. He lives a secluded, idyllic existence in a pipe, as Diogenes was said to have taken up residence in a wooden tub (or funnel, as Pantagleize's version goes). The other character is a member of the bourgeoisie, a master, the type of which he decries in the revolutionary pamphlets that he authors to pass the time, and a materialist who is most attached to his umbrella and hat. His first act is to berate Bamboolah for being an inefficient servant. In The Public Life Pantagleize is also more determined than the other, as he counters each of society's efforts to integrate and involve him with acerbic aplomb. Again like

Diogenes, he is only interested in exposing corruption and conceit. Pantagleize of Pantagleize allows himself to be used unmercifully for a cause he does not even comprehend.

There are, in spite of all the similarities and correspondences, some fundamental discrepancies between the short Transfiguration in the Circus and the long Pantagleize. Transfiguration in the Circus exploits a single image, the circus. It conforms impeccably to the unities. Pantagleize, though the period it depicts is of a day's duration, goes through an extended, rambling day indeed. And it ranges from place to place, with nine settings in all.

Transfiguration in the Circus is action-packed, and one action follows hard upon the one that preceded it. The action in Pantagleize moves in fits and starts. The first shot of the revolution in Transfiguration in the Circus is fired within the first five minutes; in Pantagleize it takes until half-way into the play for it to go off. The same holds true for the way each play establishes the social conditions which trigger a revolution; in Transfiguration in the Circus they are briefly displayed in the arrogant manner of the Manager, then overturned, putting the emphasis on the revolutionaries. In Pantagleize, they are spread over four scenes.

Pantagleize is a tangle of premonitions, plans, and recapitulations. At every juncture, the characters turn around and evaluate what just preceded: they have difficulty recalling what that really was. The play's premises and form are constantly in flux. The stylistic mode of Pantagleize is as unstable as the characters find reality to be. They can no sooner understand what just happened than the audience can

expect the dramatic texture to flow consistently. In Transfiguration in the Circus, the tone is as homogenous as the events are predictable.

And the language which, in Transfiguration in the Circus, is a mere extension of the physical life, usually stichomythic, rapid, and minimal, floods the stage in Pantagleize; there are innumerable long speeches, several of them four pages in length. And while there is some shotgun dialogue, as in the scene between Pantagleize and Rachel, that mode is mixed with such diverse others as the Dadaist excrescences of Blank and the Al Jolson diction of Bamboolah. The language is as kaleidoscopic as the play's structure, as fortuitous as the adventures that befall Pantagleize.

Dreams Drowning and Christopher Columbus

The fluidity and mutability of the sea is the commanding image which dictates the tone and structure of Christopher Columbus, "A Dramatic Fairy Tale in Three Scenes," and Drowned Dreams, "Plastic Poem." The rising bubbles and shifting sands engender two rather different experimental plays.

The deep sea diver's vista is distorted and fantastic, with some new, astounding image perpetually rising up before him. Ghelderode equates, in these plays, the diver's world with the delirious inner world of the artist's imagination. As a pragmatic King Ferdinand says, "Columbus, it has always been men of your kind who have spoiled my life. Artists in a way." He offers episodes within the mind of the artist (in the guise of the explorer) and others between the artist and more level-headed representatives of society.

We know very little about the Diver in Drowned Dreams, except that

he is bored with his everyday existence and expects a thrilling hidden world beneath the waves. "I'm going down because I'm bored with continental horizons." Why remain on the shore when, "there are encyclopedic mirrors quivering in the waters"? His motives are summed up in a few lines, and after a brief altercation with his employer, the Dealer, he takes the plunge.

His adversary, the Dealer, opposes his fanciful view, though the Diver accuses him of being a closet dreamer: "Your brain is papered with stories you've heard! If you had such a head for business, you'd be selling India rubber or frozen meat," an allegation the Dealer denies. These characters are offered as distilled, antithetical world views, rather than rounded characters.

Ghelderode's Christopher Columbus, a fanciful rendering of the historical figure, is a more fully developed version of the Diver. He echoes the Diver's initial sentiments exactly. "I am haunted by the horizon, tormented by distances." "I have a recollection of a lost world. . . . The true motive for this journey is that I am weary."

Columbus' adversaries are versions of the Dealer multiplied. The Reporter, the Friend, the Minister, the Learned Man, the King and his Jester all wish to profit vicariously from Columbus' journey (like the Dealer), but will not chance supporting a possible madman and heretic. The dream voyage implies taking a risk, translated imagistically into pushing away from the shore.

Whereas the Diver projects his own aberrations onto the Dealer, Columbus seems to imagine the King's confiding to him his secret admiration for Columbus' quest: "I lied to you. It was I, not the Queen who

gave you this ship. And no, my kingdom is not Eden. Ah, you farsighted traveler. . . ." Columbus wishes that these words would emerge from the King's lips, and they cooperatively do so.

The figures who visit Columbus all seem to be emanations which his mind projects, examples of what Werner Wolff calls, "the wish face."¹ One of them, the Sleepwalker, is a doppelganger personifying his imaginative side. The Woman who appears to see him off is, to him, his mother, his fiancée, his country, a whore, in short, a subjective conglomeration of female archetypes. The crowd is compressed into a single, enthusiastic character, a distortion that points up its subjective source.

Columbus' dream, then, begins before the voyage; his life is a dream, and he is the dreamer of it. And while both plays are constructed as tryptichs, the shore, in Drowned Dreams, has a contrastingly objectified flavor to the under-water fantasy world which intervenes. Columbus' subjectivity merely becomes intensified into a kind of delirium while he is at sea.

The dramatic element which dominates, which in fact embodies the delusion in either play, is language: a fragmented, associational stream of images (centering around gold, strange flowers, "gymnastic octopi," natives, and firewater), many of them common to both plays. The sea has both music and an intoxicating scent. The dreamers' imaginings are written down in ships' record books. The timbre and syntax of the language is the same for both dreamers:

¹Quoted by Walter Sorell, The Other Face: The Mask in the Arts (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, Co., 1973), p. 13.

Columbus: Put on a diving suit, my spirit, and slip under the waters, turn about in the currents, swim among the flowers of the deep, loiter among the worm-eaten stage setting of old disasters, follow the trail of the drowned nonchalants, those who were drowned on voyage, like my voyage, without design, without timetable. Good Nautilus protect you, my little ship, absurd boat! May God direct the winds and the sails! The sea is absolute. I am all the time moved. . . .

And from Dreams Drowning, the Octopus:

The sister of the fairground cries, for the sirens have come to an end, copper engraving vignettes, sexual soprano, curiosity about the Atlantic aquarium, story book fish! Would you say, chaste and chalky mistress, how ephemeral, how puerile, are the under-water idylls? A sea-side twilight falls beneath the waves. A spider crab sighs. Amber prunellas are looking for you.

Christopher Columbus narrates his own vision, which sometimes appears before him as characters with whom he interacts. The Octopus is the Diver's inner voice in Dreams Drowning, while he passively observes his visions, which mime the history of exploration for him, as on a stage. The Diver does not participate. The mime characters, Atlanta, the King, the Explorer, the Beggar, the Monk, and the Siren, all appear to Columbus in some way as well. The historical progression, from pre-history to transAtlantic flights, is equally expansive in either play; Columbus ends his nightmare with the equation, " $V = \frac{4}{3} R^3$," the Octopus with the technical marvels of "dear little boats which go under water, sky writing, airplanes complain about the buzzing sounds."

At the end of Christopher Columbus, once he has returned to Spain and is locked up for his pains, the explorer nonchalantly reflects upon his sojourn in America. Montezuma appears with Indian dancers who mime his words, a miniature of the structure of Dreams Drowning. Since the short play was written after Christopher Columbus, it can hardly be regarded as a sketch for the longer work. It is more likely that

Ghelderode saw the possibilities in this short mimed interlude in Christopher Columbus, and constructed the plastic poem according to this idea.

The ambiguous end of Drowned Dreams, in which the Diver accuses the Dealer of having imagined gold beneath the waves and pushes him off the pontoon, killing him, can, perhaps, be explicated with a look at Christopher Columbus' ending. Columbus, who brought devastation to the Mexican Indians with whom he felt such an affinity, feels remorse. He further regrets that his life was "not lived because I have conceded too much to dreams." He is, in short, numb and denies his dream side, which comes to him in the form of the Poet:

The Poet: So! You are not suffering?

Columbus: No -- and you?

The Poet: I? . . . (exits)

The Dealer, to whom the Diver attributes his own romantic yearnings, must die. The dreamer repudiates his dreams. The explorer kills his fancy and opts for the pragmatic "land where men walk around like apes."

Taking the premise that Christopher Columbus is from start to finish its title character's dream, explains its free-form structure, which floats and drifts like the bubbles Columbus is blowing as the curtain rises. Its episodes are delicate, fortuitous, and improvised, like the shapes of the "little spheres" which pass before his eyes.

Dreams Drowning frames and orders an equally anarchic vision, thus objectifying it. The "side panels" of the objective shore delineate the subjective portion. So does the inner frame, created by the Octopus, as he narrationally sets and strikes the oceanic scene. The mimes that accompany his narration are a device used consistently

throughout, whereas Christopher Columbus' conventions are mutable. The Diver's utter passivity and silence while underneath the waves, puts the focus on the pictorial side of his dreams. Columbus' inner genesis from idealist to pragmatist requires dramatic interaction and elaboration, since it is his character that the play emphasizes.

These plays, then, are two approaches to the same theme. In either case, using the same character conceptions, episodes, images, and linguistic techniques, Ghelderode has adapted his means to the organic requirements of divergent lengths.

Piet Bouteille and Miss Jairus

Miss Jairus, though bizarre in content, is conventional in form. "A mystery in four tableaux," (which are really traditional acts) it has an early point of attack, the tension in each act starts slack, mounts, and crests with a small climax, it has clear exposition, and its climaxes are prepared for as they would be in a Scribean well-made play. Its characters have overt conflicts and undergo, in Jacquelin's case, an obligatory transformation. A slight story is expanded into a full-length, somewhat overwritten play.

Piet Bouteille, "A Dramatic Moment in One Act," compresses the same theme into one genuine tableau, in which there is a single climax. Its characters' conflicts are intriguingly covert, and its action is compressed and tight. Sacrificed, in the short play, are elaborate character development and reversals.

However, it would seem that Ghelderode is not a master of character complexity in any case, those in Miss Jairus being as uni-

dimensional as those in Piet Bouteille. Elaboration of that single dimension becomes tedious as it rarely leads to evolution or deepening. The incidents are few, Ghelderode using various types of retardation to postpone till the end of each act a miracle, the impact of which is diminished, rather than heightened, by the intervening delay. The characters monologize and soliloquize at length, the Three Mariekes do extended rhythmic patterns, and the secondary characters make endless reappearances, all of which become quite repetitive.

Miss Jairus is about a girl who may or may not have died; no one can tell. In a trance state, she lingers between life and death. Various predatory individuals try to hurry her demise, hoping to profit from her remains. An heresiarch, Le Roux, paid by Blandine's parents, brings her back to life. A scandal ensues, and Mr. and Mrs. Jairus profit from being at the center of it. Le Roux is caught and killed in a crucifixion ceremony commemorating Christ's sacrifice. Blandine dies when he does.

Piet Bouteille is about a dying man. Various village types eagerly assemble when they hear of his impending end. The priest calls for the villagers to expose the transgressions that he has committed. As they are about to reveal these real or manufactured sins, the old man dies, and his granddaughter, who was blind, is granted sight.

Both plays are set in Flanders in the Middle Ages. Both juxtapose hypocritical respectability against a kind of supernatural sensitivity. Christ's spirit animates both plays; Le Roux is sacrificed to rid his society of a reminder of its own guilt. Piet, the innocent victim of slander, dies so that poor Madeleine may see. Le Roux dies so that

Blandine may die naturally. In this case death is a welcome escape from a rotten world.¹ Both plays end in reciprocating miracles.

The Three Mariekes, the professional mourners in Miss Jairus, are the counterparts of the Three Worthies in Piet Bouteille; both groups speak in triplets. Father Bonifacious in Piet Bouteille embodies society's sanctimonious, pious hypocrisy. The Joiner, Cloribus, the doctor, and Kaliphas, the vicar, perform the same function in Miss Jairus. Mille and Beloke, Piet's wife and son, are like Jairus and his Wife.

But whereas Piet Bouteille's stasis is in proportion to its size, that in Miss Jairus is out of proportion to its length and paucity of incident. The pictorial quality to which both plays aspire is impracticable for the lengthy running time of Miss Jairus. And while the supernatural atmosphere, redolent of death and witchery, grows unbearable in Miss Jairus, a capsule of it retains its dramatic impact in the short work.

Conclusions

While it would be presumptuous and wrong to claim that Ghelderode's short plays are better than his longer ones (Pantagleize, Chronicles of Hell, Christopher Columbus, and The Death of Doctor Faust are all notable examples of excellent longer plays), there are certain ways in which the shorter plays' relative success is unquestionable.

The short plays tend to be structurally less complex (if that can be presumed to be a dramatic value) than the longer ones. As they are

¹" . . . dans Mademoiselle Jaire, Ghelderode présente la mort comme une valeur positive, plus séduisante que la vie." Beyen, Ghelderode, p. 83.

generally so schematically arranged, their clarity and accessibility increases proportionately. Features which weaken the longer plays, scanty character development and static plots, are not only more palatable as they occur in the shorter plays; they are appropriate.

The shorter plays manage a consistency of tone to which some of the longer plays do not and should not aspire (like Pantagleize and The Death of Doctor Faust) or which weakens others of them through tedium (like Lord Halewyn and Miss Jairus). Their language is economical where the language in the longer plays, however interesting and idiosyncratic, tends to be self-indulgent. And Ghelderode's modernist vision often finds its most fitting expression in the one-acts. His emphasis of image over incident has greater force when it is sustained in a shorter time. His frequently petulant or caustic vision is also more palatable when administered in smaller doses. And it is among the one-acts too, that we find the most salient examples of Ghelderode's forays into popular forms.

Ghelderode's short one-act plays, then, are daring curiosities. As examples of symbolism and Surrealism in the drama, as applications of popular forms of entertainment, whether viewed as integrated with or independent from his longer plays, the Belgian playwright's great vitality, versatility, and dramaturgical skill are seen to best advantage in his short one-act plays.

APPENDIX A

BLOCKHEADS

A Short Play by Michel de Ghelderode

1924

Translated by David Willinger

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ACTORS

The Poet

Six wooden characters made up like dummies from Aunt Sally (fairground game). They are distributed in a row upstage. One by one, they are:

A General

A Scholar in black and white

A Dowager

A Black

A Young Anarchist

A Financier

and have expressions determined by their class or state.

DECOR

Nonexistent; a neutral space on which the actors appear.

THE POET (Enters. He watches and listens.) I'm here! Silence yes, I'm not the first to enter. You're all aware of it, hazily perhaps but you feel it's so It's me! Me Me The poet The Po - e - t (sadly) the Poet! It's apparently not written on my belly! Is it, General? Well, this is really something to stumble onto! What a line-up! Ordinary spirits, dull cretins, bright or inspired cretins, brains of the third, second, and first class, remarkable men, superior men, semi-geniuses or intermittent geniuses, occasional geniuses, integral geniuses, poets! A poet's uniform, my general! Let's see! (To the others.) Pardon me, pardon me. I say unusual things. It's my job, or rather, my function. (He walks.) The night is here over the city over us. I've come to you. I don't know what anger impelled me toward you! You others who are so unlike me me! I might just love you tonight! Here it is I wanted to take some part among men in a music hall or a cathedral in the homes of clowns or saints I know that there is something eternal under your frock coats and corsets; there is an immaterial form within your grotesque figures, a glimmer you have secret ears you're going to understand me. Listen to me I want to tell you you talk of the despair of the living God! Yes, it's a terrible revelation, inconvenient You won't find it printed in the daily papers. I found this news inscribed in the snow in volcanic letters. That's why I love you tonight and dare tell you of it. I'd never have loved you otherwise. Listen to me, listen to me, I beg you! I've seen the living God! He was in a black automobile, riding as fast as it could, a blasphemous automobile with headlights veiled in crepe, carrying him toward the shooting range A second car followed, stuffed with drunken soldiers from a firing squad. Shut up, don't say it! Me, I know Excuse me if I'm shaking, but I'm going to tell you all This God was a spy! He invaded our insides as you would take a fortress. He stole our secrets our greatest secrets! (Silence.) Me, for example, I had a plan, an actual plan to be a great master of wills, invulnerable. Here it is At midnight I went down into the heart of the cities. I spoke all tongues, as after the Spirit's descent. Men blushed as I passed, women sobbed. I came to a stop. Silence fell, the great silence which reigns between the stars I raised my hand This was a miraculous moment of life in the world (Violent about-face.) Idiots Blockheads, you're dazed, moonstruck. Ill-mannered jerks! Imbeciles! Painted heads! Hearts of bran! Entrails of string! (He smacks them generously; the dummies totter. The Poet recoils and holds his face.) Oh! You don't fight back! You're humble and submissive at the moment You turn the other cheek! Pardon! You are better than I. You are comparable to the living God whose harmonious person is about to be penetrated by twelve bullets. My eyes are open! You're beautiful. I truly, truly love you tonight. I ask pardon. You are greater than I. Let me empty my heart to you. I have a heart It is red like all hearts. It looks the way you'd expect it to. But this heart this heart this chalice I carry it in two hands! Don't cry! No, I don't want to be witness to your tears your shiny

tears which are the blood of your spirits keep
 them for the desolate times to come when the last poet
 like this miserable God will have gotten his twelve bullets.
 This will be the signal. (He chokes.) Ah! Twelve o'clock tonight.
 The earth is shaped like a beehive. It's going deaf. You could say
 that humanity is searching for itself through a fog. There are
 women money cities. I'd like to hear the outcry.
 Oh! My country! My flag! Dear dead comrades, helmets, bayonets,
 machine guns! I ate my enemy! Oh! My village! My mother
 my pristine fiancée! Something in me is about to crumble! Paper,
 please! I'm going to say to say what has never
 been said before. (Silence.) No I won't say anything!
 (Silence.) I have a headache. (Silence.) What's the use? (Silence.)
 In this nocturnal pause when the city is bursting from fever. (Silence.)
 I'm exhausted. (Silence.) Words, words, words. The dead will not
 rise. The stars won't fall. In the deep of this immense night a small
 child is stammering. (Silence. The Poet revives.) You aren't helping
 me! You don't find anything to answer me with. You stay there
 coagulated. So, there isn't anything underneath for you to expose.
 (Sudden change.) No. I'm wrong. Let's stop. Too many passions unnerve
 me, repeating passions. Everything must snap. I'm crumbling, man like
 a poster-covered wall, on my knees. Finished! There is one thing.
 I've seen the condemned man go by in an automobile the living
 God. Whom they took to the place of execution. I understood the secret
 meaning of our destiny. The hour has come. I'm expressing myself badly.
 You will excuse me. And what does it matter? This automobile! I've
 had enough of it! (He concentrates - with force.) Listen! I'm throw-
 ing the mask away! I am not a poet! It's false. I lied! I am nothing,
 nothing. Or rather I am an imbecile, a poseur, a sick man.
 I have various delusions of grandeur and persecution! Along with these,
 vices, vices, vulgarity and dirt. Best yet, I'm a parasite. I lived off
 other people, my father, my friends, women. I've stolen from the poor.
 And what's worse, I've lied, lied at all times and in all
 circumstances. I've deceived my brothers, I've soiled innocence, I
 have led the weak to despair. I've used words like insidious poisons.
 Stone me, humiliate me, insult me. Men of tomorrow, when you wish to re-
 establish justice, a justice which is incapable of explaining anything,
 but which we're all waiting for, butcher the intellectuals. Start with
 me. I offer myself. I'm not a poet not a poet!
 (He falls to his knees and explodes in sobs. The dummies start to
 laugh stupidly. The shrill voice of the poet rises above their tumult.)
 And he's going to be killed. And they're going to kill him! They're
 getting the weapons ready! The God the poor living God
 who has come into your hearts and stolen the love from them. It's he who
 has stolen! They're taking aim at him. He's pale. Oh! All this
 because of my sins! (He gets up brusquely.) How! You're laughing!
 Blockheads! You laugh you General, canned food
 eater, you laugh! Stammering scholar! You laugh! Dowager whore
 heraldic rot! You laugh! Black boxer, sinister bully! You laugh.

Tear-gassed anarchist! You laugh! Banker of lard! You dare to laugh!
With your hideous jaws, you dare to laugh! Oh to laugh . . .
at me the Poet! At me me! Me! (A volley of gun-
shot is heard.) My God! Pardon them they know not what they
do!

(The Poet leaves, distracted, as the dummies remain, hideously amused.)

APPENDIX A

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

by Michel de Ghelderode

1926

Translated by David Willinger

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Characters¹**Joseph****Mary****A Neighbor****Officer****Innkeeper****Three Shepherds****Angel****Herod****Soothsayer****Captain****Policemen****Lucifer****Devils**

¹A cast list was omitted from the French edition (Trans.).

I. SAINT JOSEPH'S HOUSE

JOSEPH - Mary, Mary, where are you?

MARY (entering) - I was with the angel who, as you know, came and told me: "I greet you Mary."

JOSEPH - He's very nice! But we've got to take a trip, and they'll start to count the children soon!¹

MARY - My God! And the infant Jesus will be born!

JOSEPH - He'll come in good time! Are you ready for the journey?

MARY - Alas! Can't we take the train?

JOSEPH - That's too expensive! We've got to go on foot!

MARY - We are so poor! It's winter and it's going to snow!

JOSEPH - Courage, Saint Mary, things will get better later!

(Someone knocks.)

MARY - It's the neighbor who's here to see how we're doing.

NEIGHBOR - Hello, carpenter. Is the infant Jesus born yet?

JOSEPH - Not yet, but he's on his way! He'll be a very beautiful child!

MARY - It was the angel who told me I was going to have him!

NEIGHBOR - You are blessed among women!

MARY - I'm the Lord's servant! Do you have many children, Neighbor?

NEIGHBOR - Twenty five! I'm going to kill three for Christmas!

JOSEPH - You're going to kill three children!

NEIGHBOR - No, three pigs! Good-bye. (He exits.)

MARY - I'm going to get myself ready for the journey!

¹He's concerned with the census.

JOSEPH - Don't forget to bring slices of bread! And if all goes well, we'll be back in time to celebrate Christmas!

II. JERUSALEM

OFFICER (alone on stage) - Keep moving! Keep moving! Seems like the whole world is here. It's good for business! Keep moving.

JOSEPH AND MARY (entering) - Officer, do you know where we can find lodging?

OFFICER - The Innkeeper's homes!

JOSEPH - They're all full up!

MARY - It's very sad! It's snowing and we've got to stay outside!

OFFICER - I can't do anything about it! And if you get into a group, I'll order you to keep moving!

JOSEPH - I've already moved around all night! Give me lodging in the *amigo*.

OFFICER - It's also full up! Are you sure you don't want to keep moving? Then I'm going to move! Good night! (He leaves.)

MARY - Saint Joseph! The infant Jesus is going to be born. I have a pain in the belly!

JOSEPH - Alas! I'll beg the innkeepers. (He knocks at the left.) Sir, be nice and give me a roof for my wife who is going to have the infant Jesus and is getting pains in her belly.

INNKEEPER - We're full up!

JOSEPH (running to knock at the right) - Mister, we're freezing cold. Put up me and my wife.

INNKEEPER - Get away! I don't put up the lower class!

JOSEPH - How evil! Without money you're nothing on this earth!

MARY - Saint Joseph! What's going to become of us, we are so unhappy!

JOSEPH - Well, we're going to become a little more unhappy yet! (He cries. Mary cries too. The official comes back.)

OFFICIAL - What are you still doing on the public road?

JOSEPH - Nothing! We're in the street! Have pity on us!

OFFICIAL - It's sad! You seem like decent people! If you aren't too picky, take the first street on the right. You'll find a stable with an ass and a cow!

MARY - Thank you, Officer. The infant Jesus is about to be born at midnight.

JOSEPH - Good night, Officer; excuse us for the inconvenience!

OFFICIAL - That's all right! Keep moving! (Joseph and Mary leave; a large silver star comes down from above by a string.)

III. THE SHEPHERDS' HOME

SHEPHERD I - The weather's beautiful for Christmas tonight!

SHEPHERD II - You can see everything as clear as noon!

SHEPHERD III - It's because of the big star! (The star sways.)

SHEPHERD I - It's a new star!

SHEPHERD II - I've never seen such blinkante!

SHEPHERD III - It'll come back this night every year!

(Music.)

SHEPHERD I - I hear music!

SHEPHERD II - Beautiful music, a solo or a duet!

SHEPHERD III - It seems like it's coming from the sky! (An angel flies.)

SHEPHERDS I, II, AND III - It's an angel! Let's kneel!

ANGEL - I'm in charge of the flock and of music! Shepherds, little shepherds, it's winter and it has snowed! Shear your sheep and take the wool to the infant Jesus who is cold!

SHEPHERDS I, II, AND III - Poor little Jesus. Let's shear our sheep!

ANGEL - Go and adore him, I will care for your flock!

SHEPHERDS I, II, AND III - Where must we go, Angel?

ANGEL - It's there, where the star hangs from above!

SHEPHERDS I, II, AND III - Let's go to adore the infant Jesus who is cold!

ANGEL - Heavenly angels, sing!

ANGELS (in Heaven) - Gloria in excelsis Deo. . . .

SHEPHERDS I, II, AND III - And peace on earth to men of good will!
(They exit.)

IV. IN HEROD'S PALACE

(Herod is with his soothsayer.)

HEROD (in a rage) - What is this that you're telling me! I ask you for good news and you say that someone is going to overthrow me!!

SOOTHSAYER - Sire! Don't be angry! It's this way in the lines of your hand! I can't lie in the face of this!

HEROD - You lied. Pinefly of my bad luck!¹ Come to me, my policemen! Someone wants to overthrow me! Me! The great King Herod, commemorated in the Bible Stories!

SOOTHSAYER - Pity, Sire! You mustn't be scared! This is only a little menneke who's coming to be born, and he's still nursing from his mother!²

HEROD - Sure, sure! And what's his name?

SOOTHSAYER - It's Jesus! His birth was brought about with a star, as the Scripture says. He's the king of kings!

HEROD - We'll see about that! Police, hurry! (A battalion of policemen enter.)

¹Night bonnet.

²Little gentleman.

CAPTAIN - Present, Sire; whose head would you have us cut off?

HEROD - To start with, this evil pinefly who told me this disgusting news.

CAPTAIN - As you wish, Sire! Cut. To arms! (The soothsayer is dead.)
And after?

HEROD - After! You are going to kill all the little children who happen to be born! This way, I'm sure not to miss the infant Jesus!

CAPTAIN - Sire, those little guys haven't done anything!

HEROD - That's my order! And to top it off, cut off the head of John the Baptist, who baptised this infant Jesus! And bring it here!

CAPTAIN - In a paper or on a plate?

HEROD - On a plate!

CAPTAIN - As you wish Sire! Battalion, half turn, right! Take your knives and kill all the little children for the good of all! Greetings, Sire! Is that all?

HEROD - It's enough for today! You'll be decorated! (The battalion leaves with the captain.)

HEROD (alone) - So, the noble Herod will remain the master! And it won't come to too many children! They'll buy more of them!

(He leaves.)

V. SAINT JOSEPH'S HOME

(Joseph and Mary are in bed. Someone knocks.)

MARY - Saint Joseph, do you hear?

JOSEPH - Sss. . . . Sss. . . . Sss. . . . Sss!

MARY - Someone knocked three times!

JOSEPH - You were dreaming, or it's the neighbor killing the little animals.

(They go back to sleep. Someone knocks.)

MARY - Saint Joseph, get up! Someone knocked again!

JOSEPH - It's the wind! I don't like getting up!

MARY - Or they're thieves who are coming to take the infant Jesus away!

JOSEPH - No! The little child's asleep! Let's sleep as well!

(They go back to sleep. Three formidable knocks.)

MARY - Saint Joseph, did you hear! There's someone behind the door!

JOSEPH (in nightgown) - Who's there!

ANGEL (enters) - Me! Leave Joseph, leave Mary, and take the infant Jesus along! Fly away from these parts! It's going to smell around here and all the innocents are going to bleed!

MARY - What good luck that someone forewarned us! Where must we go, good angel?

ANGEL - To Pharaoh's in Egypt!

JOSEPH - We obey you without delay! (The angel leaves.) Saint Mary, get the bundles ready, and don't forget the infant Jesus!

MARY - That's it! Everything is ready. . . . It's sad to leave your house!

JOSEPH - We'll come back, that's certain! Come, Saint Mary, for I hear trumpets. (They leave.)

VI. THE MASSACRE

Description: The police enter. There aren't any innocents, but the police set to massacring! They fight amongst themselves. Cannon shots. Shouting. Ferocious battle. Thunder. The captain shouts: "Victory!" The policemen, dead and alive, reassemble and line up. It is understood that all the innocents have been slaughtered.

VII. IN HEROD'S PALACE

(Triumphal entry of the police and the captain - Herod is furious.)

CAPTAIN - Sire! They've all been killed!

HEROD - That's not true!

POLICE - Sire, it is true!

HEROD - You lie, the infant Jesus has played schampavie.¹

CAPTAIN - That's impossible!

HEROD - How many children did you slaughter?

CAPTAIN - Two hundred thousand, three hundred fifty seven!

HEROD - How many?

CAPTAIN - 200,357, exactly!

HEROD (pathetically) - There's still a few more of them! Start again!

CAPTAIN - Pity Sire, I don't have any more courage!

HEROD - Traitor! Die! (He kills the captain.) And you, policeman, you haven't kept to the contract! Perish! (The battalion drops dead.)

LUCIFER (appearing) - Miserable hangman!

HEROD - Wait. . . . I'm going to repent!

LUCIFER - Too late! (Frightful wrestling. Fire, flames. Herod is led to Hell along with the policeman and the captain.)

¹Has fled to England.

VIII.

And when this spectacle had ended, the backdrop rose. And there was an illuminated manger. This was the Christmas celebration, and this manger was faithfully replicated, so they can still be seen in the churches. The player intoned a narrative song for the occasion, which was later replaced by Adam's "Christmas." At the end of the song, coarse candies were tossed into the room. The public, which was waiting for that moment, bawled out at the top of their voices, Koekskes! Koekskes!"

APPENDIX A

VENUS

A Tragi-Farce by Michel de Ghelderode

1926

Translated by David Willinger

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

VENUS	Nude Lady
de ROMEO	Sea Knight
KAPMAN	German Butcher
COUNT ASPIRIN	Victim of the Soviets
CURTIUS	Director of archeological expeditions
	Voice of the Director

(The curtain is closed (a mandolin playing the "Carnival of Venice")
This dialogue between Venus and the Director goes on):

-- I beg you, dear Venus! -- What for, director? -- Because
it just isn't done! -- What? -- What you're doing!
-- I'm not doing anything! -- What you are then! -- What am I?
-- A woman! -- So what? -- Nude! -- And my mandolin?
-- That's not clothing . . . Get dressed! . . . -- Nude I was
born; nude I will play; nude I will die! -- It's against morality!
-- No, but it is against the tastes of the times! -- You'll bring
me to disaster! -- You'll make a fortune! Am I not pretty?
-- My God, like a deadly sin! -- Youthful? -- Frightfully!
-- Innocent? -- Can't sleep because of it! -- Pretty, youthful,
innocent, and nude, why shouldn't I show myself to the crowd?
-- They're honest people! -- Do they blush? -- They're
moralists! -- Have they given away any little gifts?
-- They're the journalists! -- They see the world through my
mouth! -- They're the military! -- Just because they run to
distinguish themselves at the front, doesn't mean I'm going to bear
any children for a nation which doesn't tolerate pretty girls parading
around nude! -- At least put something in front of your belly,
even if it's only this last sentence! -- The scene's set in the
Garden of Eden! -- Lie! . . . -- a drafting room at the
Academy! -- Let's go on with the hut of Phryne! -- Don't get
so excited, my name will make you. -- But what about mythology!
. . . Physical culture! . . . -- Calm down, little creature of
the clinic. To each his madness. -- The crowd is hot enough
without this too. Let your madness be discreet. -- Loving sickness!
Phantoms, to the crowd, false asses, false noses, false feelings, false
art, plenty of make-up, thirty-six farts, and a fancy funeral every now
and then. As for me, I am going to save the theatre. It was too gold-
gilded, I want it violet-colored! . . . -- There was a moment there
when I thought you were going to rape me! -- My hands haven't known

you no matter how nude you are! . . .

(the mandolin is interrupted).

(LONG SILENCE).

(After which, the mandolin resumes playing the "Carnival of Venice").

(THE CURTAIN PARTS).

PLACE: Fourth floor -- in front.

DECOR: Nothing (simple railing). At the center of the platform, a huge statue of the Venus de Milo on an imitation marble pedestal. She is white and her belly covered with numbers. The mannequin should be selected from a store for hernial belts and straps.

LIGHTING: Placed on the ground, along the ramps, six globe lamps from 1880. (The mandolin stops once again. -- Since this forcefully declaimed dialogue draws near).

VOICE OF VENUS -- . . . and NOW may I enter nude?

VOICE OF THE DIRECTOR -- . . . Yes, but do it with style. Watch out for the marks the lights make. And above all, above all, don't talk. When you're nude, you keep quiet. Silence is elegance. Keep your thighs and your teeth shut. (His voice receding). For a women's voice evokes her sex. And how unseemly that would be under the skies of France pale from the German defeat! . . .

(Venus, nude, (*) enters, jumping over the lamps, bows, puts her mandolin down. -- Then this monotonous recitative:)

VENUS -- . . . My father was called Heimatlos, my mother was Israeli. Somber mysteries of civil status. But how can you really know how these things begin? I call myself Venus but my real name is Julie. My favorite dream was to become a dame of the Empire; my second dream was to be gunned down while dancing; my third to be a sad song; my last dream was for a cowboy to come on to me while I leafed through a collection of poems. Idle and pleasant fantasies, not practical. For you've got to contribute ever so much to improve History just a little. But you never know: Not being able to hope to see the Empire back again nor to get hit by these twelve shots for which there's got to be a better use nor to become a melody buried in the sarcophogus of a phonograph, and disdainful of the puritanical cowboy who doesn't like poetry -- boredom being born one day -- I take the good fortune of my nudity to the morning mirror, my morning nudity to the sentimental mirror. I wanted to look like that ancient Beauty you always come back to, as to the miracles, as to a quadrille. I succumbed not only to the charm of the Apollo of the Belvedere of the Flaying of Discobulus (indicating the statue of Venus) but to that of this Venus, constant and beyond fashion, whose arms have cradled the ideal of so many artists who may even suffer from worshipping her. My destiny henceforward is to look like her and I'm practicing by appearing nude. You could be a typist or a star or something just as rare, but Venus, that's just the job for me, I who have equal amounts of character and ambition. I wish to be Venus and to wish to is to

(*) This nudity, conceived by the painter Marcel Stobbaerts, is riskier than one could merely imagine: a zinc cylinder, breasts and stomach sketched on it, head, arms and legs sticking out.

be able to. But what confuses me, what upsets me, is the day and night agonizing which of the two of us has too few limbs and which of the two has too many. A sculptural solution's been suggested by some sympathetic aesthetes to me: to go without a head, be well-winged and call myself Victory! I wish only to be beautiful, mutilated, Venus, by some clever surgery to live my life in immortality, for me the copy to be better than the original! . . . (turning toward Venus) . . . your invisible arms inspire me O sublime invalid! I'll be your sister. I'll have your distant gaze which follows the rising of the ashes. I'll have your belly of indifferent plaster tattooed with finite numbers. AND LIKE YOU, A VIRGIN! . . . (She smiles. A horn is heard trying to play a difficult part from Siegfried. Venus fidgets) . . . This horn has the timbre of the North Sea from which you sprang forth my sea knight, you who pursue truth by roaming! . . . (de Romeo, the sea lord, appears).

. . . He's coming too soon! I wanted to give him a surprise for his birthday! . . . (de Romeo is a blond diver. He is carrying his mask in his left arm, like a helmet. In his right arm he brandishes his horn).

VENUS (at the knight's neck) -- . . . I love your horn! . . .

DE ROMEO (as in the Comedie Francaise) -- . . . Have you heard the soul in it? You are nude again! . . .

VENUS (indicating the lamps) -- . . . I'm attending to the flames!
. . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . Let our outpourings respect their mysterious globes! Venus, I have left the waves in order to see you again and you know how much I'm drawn to the oceans and the forests . . . Old ships filled up with gold, ancient forests rich with echoes! I have captured ten thousand different echoes and brought up ten thousand

doubloons! I'm that kind of guy! . . . Now I will sound the horn to your beauty! The quarry!

VENUS -- Too soon! When the lamps have gone out! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . O, but I am weary of running all over the world! This brochure is pulling the wool over my eyes: It said "Truth is in roaming." I plunged in and cut through the underbrush . . . Those communists are skunks! . . .

VENUS -- . . . I am the truth!

DE ROMEO -- . . . You lie. But I like lies like that. Let's live off our lies and despise everything that's not born of our dreams! (Confidential). I believed myself to be a modern-day Parsifal. Haven't I seen the mountain of Salvation of the polypi of love under the coral battlements in the submerged perspectives of huge backdrops? Calvary and His tragedy had been swallowed up long before the Holy Scriptures were drafted. If I hadn't been so sensitive would I ever have made the vow to the Supreme Being never to take off my costume? . . . (Ecstatic) O aquarium spindles . . . mechanical octopi . . . shipwrecked toboggans . . . (Genuine) . . . so many oysters, but hardly any pearls . . .

VENUS -- . . . I'm jealous of the sirens' chorales! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . Unfortunate one! The lamps are going to go out! . . .

VENUS -- . . . The flame is painted on the globes! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . Should I play the french horn afterwards? the fanfare of Roland . . . the last season of Corbiere . . . the provincial regrets of Laforgue? . . .

VENUS -- . . . Something along the lines of the Last Judgment . . . this prelude which commemorates the invention of gun powder . . . (he kneels and plays. And the horn reverberates five miles from the scene -- the prelude played, Venus embraces de Romeo.)

DE ROMEO -- . . . Did you hear the crystal cones vibrating from the echoes? Take your mandolin -- filthy thing -- and let's give ourselves up to love . . . Are you crying, darling?

VENUS -- . . . Why oh why did you make that absurd vow never to take off your clothes?

DE ROMEO -- . . . for the redemption of some poets which the imbeciles' curse shot to hell . . . Don't cry any more or cry on me . . . I am impermeable! . . . (They leave arms entwined. Venus forgets her mandolin. Kapman, the butcher, enters. Red. Iron cross. Bloody apron. Knife in a leather belt. Yellow gloves and monocle).

KAPMAN -- . . . Who goes there like two ducks doing the tyrolean yodel . . . La-la-to! . . . Lovers! Double egotism. I won't cool my heels for long . . . It's ten o'clock in the evening. Let's display this kit that was awarded to us . . . (It strikes ten o'clock. At each stroke, Kapman brandishes a butcher or cook's cleaver. Of the terrible knives, numbering ten, the last is a hand-saw -- which he shows off with affection and affectation.)

. . . Venus! Tomb of sculpture. The instant has come for celestial dissections. It'll be more beautiful than crime, sweeter than incest. And I dedicate this mystical horror to you, dear Isadore -- author of the songs of Maldoror . . . (Venus reenters, and like a she-goat:)

VENUS -- . . . O my little Kapman, man of the hour, dilettante butcher assassin, last of the race of slaughterers, condemned to death with felicitations from the sadistic, artistic Berlin jury! . . .

KAPMAN -- . . . (heels together) A misunderstanding, Madame, here's what needs to be said. I've come on a little business . . .

VENUS -- . . . O my little Kapman, let's go to perfection far away from all literature, so long as the sea knight's sleeping, tired from his struggle against this chrestomatic octopus. At his awakening I shall be the Eve of the new western barbary! . . .

KAPMAN (bellowing) -- . . . The fresh flesh! OOOOO! Memory, what you want from me! O my 37 victims, young people of good family sawed up like veal meat! . . . I was in the great war, Madame Venus, and was promoted to the rank of cannibalist by ze fieldmarshall. They cited me by the armies' order of the day as an example of national appetite and good humor! The corpse, this is the most noble invention of the century. I ate second class soldiers and generals. At the armistice I ate Spartacists. Then a generation of Ephebes with exquisite brains . . . But I have not yet eaten the two arms of Venus! . . .

VENUS -- . . . (hugging the butcher) Colorful brute! How much I'd like you to welcome me to this butcher shop where you wrap your ambiguous parts in newspapers relating your misdeeds, your trial and your loftiness! . . .

KAPMAN -- . . . It is impossible, dear, for I certainly never sacrificed anything on your altar. Young men are the only ones I carve up with sincerity. And if I accept a little work on your person it is the good artist who's taking it on rather than the butcher or the German! . . .

VENUS -- . . . So be it. But before losing my arms to such a perfect plan, I'd like to use them one last time! . . . What should I do with them?

KAPMAN -- . . . Do you know the diabolos? They were playing it when cubism was born! . . .

VENUS -- . . . These two serpents . . . what will be their ultimate scheme in time and space? . . .

KAPMAN -- . . . I summon POU living in the grammars with chou hibou bijou! O uncivil fleas which undermined Isadore's geneology. . .

VENUS -- . . . Antennae of the spirit. What subtleties you've got butcher! . . . (She starts to scratch her head feverishly -- dry sound -- Meanwhile Kapman sharpens ten knives and whistles the first movement of the Heroic Symphony.)

Then:

KAPMAN (a knife between his teeth) -- . . . Gott mit uns! . . .

VENUS (deliriously) -- . . . You said it! . . . How are you going to do it . . . little butcher . . .

KAPMAN (blushing) -- . . . That can't be discussed . . . (they leave. Shortly after: dynamite flashes, screams, cooing, formidable grating of the hack-saw. The french horn resounds to the left. A taxi horn honks from the right. And all noise stops short:)

VOICE OF VENUS -- . . . Again . . . my little Kap . . .

VOICE OF KAPMAN -- . . . The legs? . . .

DE ROMEO (surging from the left, mask in his arms and horn in hand).
Voices in the night . . . Alert! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN (surging from the right. He has no arms. Dressed as a cab driver) -- . . . That woman! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . What is the gentleman looking for? . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . I am Count Aspirin . . . exiled! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . And I de Romeo . . . sea knight!

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . It is Venus whom I seek . . . Sound your horn toward the waves! . . .

DE ROMEO (upset) -- . . . Where did you leave your arms? . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . The Soviets cut them off because I refused to become a laborer . . . At present I'm rebuilding my life . . . with elbow grease! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . My lot is the same as yours. . . I never take off my clothes and I'm Venus' lover! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . Venus'?

DE ROMEO -- . . . Herself!

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . I am lost! . . . (At these words Kapman returns triumphantly -- He brandishes the bloody arms of Venus).

KAPMAN -- . . . Find a place for my climax! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . Those arms! . . . They belong to me! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . What is this, a theatre? . . .

KAPMAN -- . . . Beautiful work! Ach! . . . Beautiful work? . . . mutton! . . . tender filet! . . . Ach! Venus! . . .

DE ROMEO (understanding) -- . . . Our love is amputated! . . . I who counted on those arms tearing my clothes off with a sweet violence! . . . All is over! . . . Love dies! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN (horrified, to Kapman) -- . . . Are you playing along with the Soviets?

KAPMAN (kissing the arms) -- . . . They belong to a young effeminate man. They belong to a young masculine girl . . . I don't want to know . . . This doubt is sauce anglaise! . . .

DE ROMEO (tearful) -- . . . O defunct arms . . . I want to sing your funeral services on my nostalgic horn . . . (He puts the horn to his lips).

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . What's going on?

DE ROMEO -- . . . Cry without understanding, cry like this horn . . .

(Venus enters. In place of her pretty arms, two red stumps. She has a crown of flowers on her brow).

VENUS -- . . . I am Venus, truly living, drunk from chloroform, saint of women and of the moons, I bring to the ages unexpurgated, voluptuous love without hugging . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN (at his feet) -- . . . This love which I'm waiting for, which I've practiced for, you're the one I love, so let's try out this curious form of love for always the main thing is to keep a certain equilibrium, let's flee in my taxi I am Russian you are free . . .

DE ROMEO (using his horn like a megaphone) -- . . . Aspirin . . . Aspirin . . . Don't waste your time with that little kid (*) . . .

(*) This phrase produced a comic effect ca. 1905.

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . Property is theft! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . A good definition for tramps to console themselves with? . . . (he clobbers the count who falls).

KAPMAN -- . . . I don't like this violence! . . .

DE ROMEO (to Venus) -- . . . Panting, I'm carrying you off. . .

VENUS -- . . . Take it easy and not too fast my sea lord.

DE ROMEO -- . . . My genuine Venus.

KAPMAN -- . . . Make love till morning! . . . (he recites from the tips of his lips:)

Ite, agite, o juvenes; et desudate medullis
Omnibus inter vos; non murmura vestra columbae,
Brachia non hederæ, non vincant oscula conchæ.
Ludite: sed vigiles nolite extinguere lychnos.
Omnia nocte vident; nil cras meminere lucernæ. (*)

VENUS -- . . . Cultured man, butcher of the elite, chock-full of the humanities . . . The future is in butchers! The present is ours. I hear the call of the bed, white beast which wears its linen inside . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . O the loves of Venus and the diver . . . What a superb novel not to publish. Let's go fulfill our passions slowly . . . (with a poetic look) . . . let's join the constellation of Sagittarius! . . . (he takes Venus in his arms with mask and horn and flees).

(*) These elegant lines could be from Petronius.

KAPMAN (looking at the fainted count) . . . How simplistic their pleasures are! They haven't read the songs of Maldoror. It's a great error in our times! . . . Just between the two of us, dear count, would you happen to be thirty years old? I fancy your slavic marrow. And I swear my cannibalism isn't mere opportunism tonight! . . . (he drags the count into the wings. The play stops short for an instant. A rope ladder drops from the ceiling. The clear disk of a dull lantern begins to graze the statue of Venus lightly. And Curtius descends upon the theatre with two artificial arms strapped in bandages. Scholar with a white beard, sporting shorts, jacket, binoculars, etc. . .)

CURTIUS -- . . . These lamps, remarkable rites, morbid chapel. Since Venus is here it's impossible for this cult's meaning to elude me much longer. The ladies are in the salon. (he checks the place out) . . . I'm operating like a criminal. Who knows if Nick Carter might not be in the wall. But this is all for science, science which isn't what any twenty people together think it is. And if they arrested me I would renounce my titles: Curtius, foremost wax molder of the Royal Palace until the Revolution. Since, director of archeological expeditions of all kinds . . . (he raises his artificial arms).

Absolutely certain that the local Venus is the most deeply entrenched, I am going to destroy this, one of the most flagrant prejudices of the Beaux-Arts teachings! Venus de Milo has arms and these arms are here! They were buried not far from the Capitol. Let's return them to the arts . . . In a few moments I will know glory! . . . I assert that it's not just an artistic grafting, but an incontestably historic restoration. The numbers inscribed by me during a similar night are absolutely precise, and here are the last factors of this equation in which "x" is the diameter of the peritonium and "y" the specific weight of the cerebellum! . . . (he goes up to the statue and screws on the arms which fit like a glove).

My calculations were correct! It only remains for me to do this supreme mathematical proof, the proof by nine, of this old masterpiece -- then by the preposterous . . .

MAN'S VOICE (from the left) -- . . . Help! . . .

MAN'S VOICE (from the right) -- Help! . . .

CURTIUS (phlegmatically) -- . . . I'm burnt! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN (coming from the right) -- . . . He's slicing me . . . he's cutting me up! . . .

DE ROMEO (coming from the left) -- . . . She owns me completely! . . .

CURTIUS -- . . . Gentlemen . . . I invite you to come visit my collection of erotic statuettes and plesosauri. . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . Save me from this butcher's chops! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . From this bachante's filthy stumps . . .

CURTIUS -- . . . At midnight you have such visions. The only unpleasant part is waking up. Let's cherish these bedtime stories! . . .

KAPMAN (bursting in, saw in hand) -- O, the wretched! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN (kneeling) -- . . . Rape me if you like but don't irritate my gland! . . .

VENUS (lashing out at her lover) -- . . . You're hiding from my ardor! . . .

DE ROMEO (delirious) -- . . . I don't want you running your hand through my hair. It's unnatural! . . .

VENUS -- . . . Salty diver . . . pneumatic knight! . . .

CURTIUS -- . . . World peace is becoming a myth. Ladies, gentlemen, gather instead in front of my work! Beauty like agriculture has lost its arms. I gave them to her!

VENUS (Shakespearean) -- . . . Misery! . . . Poor me! . . . My destiny is screwed up . . . Screwed up! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . Let's see . . . we'll leave together in search of the truth! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN (to Curtius) -- . . . Some of my parts are left behind in Moscow . . . Would you be able to go there? . . . I am the male Venus! . . .

KAPMAN (grabbing the count) -- . . . What a declaration! . . . So that's what you are!

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . All the leap years! . . .

VENUS (in extreme crisis) -- . . . My arms . . . I want my arms!
. . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . Come into mine! . . .

KAPMAN -- . . . Your arms, madame, are my salary! . . .

CURTIUS -- . . . What a dirty little world! . . .

VENUS -- . . . All that's left for me is death since I can't survive!
. . . Come, de Romeo, to a magnificent suicide! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . Such strong emotions! . . .

VENUS -- Once is not enough. The river's rushing right in front of me . . .
In dying we'll look back on our infancy up through puberty . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . I'll follow you even in death into the river, but
always true to my vow not to take my clothes off! (he puts on his
diving mask).

VENUS (beside herself -- taking him away) -- . . . Adieu! . . . All
is vanity. That's for sure. Nothing lasts under the sun. But with
a little care, you could make a miracle! . . . (the dramatic couple
exit).

CURTIUS (sententious) -- . . . Men pass on, their works remain! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . My hope is killed along with this woman! . . .

KAPMAN -- . . . It's a terrifically dismal story! . . .

CURTIUS -- . . . I'm going right back to the Institute . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . And I to my garage . . .

KAPMAN -- . . . And I to my business . . . (Tumult. Reentrance of
de Romeo, glistening wet and waving a newspaper).

DE ROMEO -- . . . Halt! . . . Consternation! . . . Here's the late
news . . . Venus is drowned! . . .

CURTIUS -- . . . And you? . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . Did I or did I not vow never to take off my clothes?
. . . O the scenarios of destiny! . . . Read! It's about Venus! . . .

KAPMAN -- . . . She's dead, we know . . . Look at the obituaries! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . Not this one . . . the other! . . .

CURTIUS -- . . . Do you see me turning pale?

DE ROMEO -- . . . This newspaper tells of the events before they transpired! . . .

CURTIUS (reading the paper) -- . . . The arms discovered at the Capitol by Dr. Curtius are . . . apocryphal! (He tears the two extra arms off the statue) . . . Such mistakes! . . . Good faith isn't enough! . . . But I will find them for something is missing from universal harmony! . . . I've actually discovered the Mona Lisa with a fake smile! . . . (calm) . . . Which of you is coming to Tibet with me where I'm going to dig on behalf of the British Museum, in caverns containing illuminating inscriptions on Atlantis! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . Me . . . I've got initiative! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . All that's left for me is to organize my despair . . . Oh! Venus . . . I'm hungry for you! . . .

KAPMAN -- . . . My little one! . . . I'll give you a taste for other meats! . . . Are you alone in life? . . . Come take refuge in my butcher shop . . . You'll eat the succulent flesh of a child of the century! . . . I have a Japanese boudoir, and I'll reveal loves to you way beyond anything in stupid Eden! . . .

DE ROMEO -- . . . It's all the same to me, so long as I don't break my vow! . . .

KAPMAN (in his ear) . . . and you'll read the songs of Maldoror! . . .

COUNT ASPIRIN -- . . . To Tibet, Curtius . . . I will become ugly! . . . For you don't know what's happening to the soul in Europe! . . . (the two leave, serious and pondering their future existence. The others climb slowly up to the ceiling. The statue of Venus begins to tilt on its pedestal -- dizzily.)

APPENDIX A

THE PUBLIC LIFE OF PANTAGLEIZE

A Play in One Act by Michel de Ghelderode

1926

Translated by David Willinger

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TO THE KIND READER:

A word before raising the curtain on this thing of naught, this sketch which introduces a character to the theatre who later went on to take form, face and life in a more major play, to such an extent that he received the appreciation of both the public and the elite; such is Pantagleize, a poet without poems, a poet in life, a cousin of the great Charlot, and just as deserving of affection as he was.

While Pantagleize continues its run at the Pocket Theatre in Brussels from October 15, 1953 on - sensitively played by Roland Ravez, who seems to have come into the world expressly for the purpose of creating this role - we are here offering the first version of this catastrophic and touching work, doubtless given its name because of the clever ingenuity of the gentlemen to survive his author - with whom he will be confused in centuries to come. But it's too arrogant to say that, to hope to see it Let the kind reader - more or less kind, or let's say polite - expect no more than a modest document of theatrical history, and everything will be perfect. If, besides this, he is amused and smiles, we won't have wasted our time with this exhumation - for the present Pantagleize, returned from his previous life and being a believer in the transmigration of souls, dates his birth 1926, a time during which the dramatic author had become stunted, and was using nothing of the tragic. Finally, it is hoped that the reader reads these pages without thinking of the future destiny of the sweet beggar, this Pantagleize, who'll have to be shot one day during an atrocious and absurd age very like our own. Or if bitterness should enter his heart owing to this organized massacre of innocents reading their beautiful final hour like rabbits, let him think of the "Metaphysical Tribulations of Pantagleize," which we should publish some day, and in which spectacle it will come to pass that from this villainous world the pure will wind up being reunited with God. That is the blessing I wish him.

CHARACTERS

PANTAGLEIZE	Philosopher by temperament and intellect . . . badly shaven, badly groomed; not at all handsome, but endearing.
THE CITY GUARD	Just what he sounds like.
FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST	Ditto.
POLITICIAN I	In yellow, with the number I on his back, like a bicycle racer.
POLITICIAN II	In blue, same description with a number II.
POLITICIAN III	In red, same description with a number III. The three politicians above are cast from the same mold, and wear top hats on their heads and cothurni on their feet.
AUNT JUJUBE	ANNO AETATIS SUAE: Innumerable.
CHORUS	(Antique, obviously.) All the dogs of Greece.

SETTING

An imprecise landscape, very imprecise, on the outskirts of Athens. Weeds and boxes of canned goods. A fence with outdated posters: "Vote for Alcibiades, the superman who" Downstage, a long pipe - conduit for water or gas, abandoned by the Administration. Upstage, a column in ruins (Ionic, judging from the top). In the distance, the Acropolis, in picture-postcard colors, very noble, blue dominating.

TIME

Earlier than yesterday and sooner than tomorrow.

SCENE I

Alone, Pantagleize in a short tunic and with a ribbon in his hair, dances buoyantly, raising a cloud of dust. He rhythmically beats two pot lids together, which serve as cymbals. Behind the fence stands the City Guard, who is observing him.

PANTAGLEIZE - Tra la lay
Pan Pan
Boom bim bam
Pan Pan
Tra la lay
Pan Pan

CITY GUARD - Citizen?

PANTAGLEIZE - (ceasing to beat the pot covers, but not his dancing)
Pan Pan?

CITY GUARD - I summon you.

PANTAGLEIZE - Citizen, you say?

CITY GUARD - (solemn) I said: "Hold it!" Authority is summoning you, citizen.

PANTAGLEIZE - That's what I'm standing here for.

CITY GUARD - What for?

PANTAGLEIZE - Summoned. And listening to you, citizen.

CITY GUARD - I am the representative of the law.

PANTAGLEIZE - Enter and make yourself at home.

CITY GUARD - (approaches and takes out his stiletto) Pantagleize?

PANTAGLEIZE - Me, yes! So?

CITY GUARD - What were you singing? The hymn to the god Pan?

PANTAGLEIZE - No, citizen. The gods, you know And my voice, you know.

CITY GUARD - What then?

PANTAGLEIZE - This was my hymn of onomatopoeias, signifying nothing, euphorically ejaculated, tim, tom, ta, pan, pan

CITY GUARD - (writing) Zonomatopoeia. Doesn't follow.

PANTAGLEIZE - Yes, pan, pan, dance phrases, all of which have nothing to do with any religion, seeing as I don't practice any.

CITY GUARD - Strange. (He reflects.) Then you were singing as you danced?

PANTAGLEIZE - The sneak! I who meant to dance while I sang! This is something worth considering until kalendis.¹ (A moment.) Officer, can you come to the point?

CITY GUARD - So there's a point ? What fine teaching is this? Either I'm going astray, or you are leading me astray, citizen. What's your aim in dancing?

PANTAGLEIZE - Hygiene. Euphoria. The exercise of a healthy vitality, don't you know. (He blushes.) And to take care of my figure, of my Ephebe style.

CITY GUARD - (blushes) Don't watch me out of the corner of your eye. The Ephebes, the suburbs Ahem! (Inspired.) Were you dancing for yourself, a bit, or should I view this game as an endeavor to

PANTAGLEIZE - To what?

CITY GUARD - An attempt at

PANTAGLEIZE - At what?

CITY GUARD - I understand! (thinking) No, it's too awful. But then, is he disturbing, does he disturb the public order with his pan-pan?

PANTAGLEIZE - You seem contrite.

CITY GUARD - What does that word mean?

PANTAGLEIZE - You seem reflective.

CITY GUARD - Yes! That is my job! (He makes up his mind.) Citizen, are you respectful of the Laws?

PANTAGLEIZE - I respect that which commands respect and the Laws which prove respectable.

CITY GUARD - Well said! (He writes.) Do you have a dwelling place?

¹
The convocation.

PANTAGLEIZE - This pipe.

CITY GUARD - You have a pipe. (Interested.) I put ten drachmas on Epimanondas, first race, who's coming to the lineup straight from the Pantheon's friezes.

PANTAGLEIZE - I predict that he'll come in with flying colors. Anyway, this cylinder is my dwelling place.

CITY GUARD - Funny!

PANTAGLEIZE - And what about my master, Diogenes? He used to live in a funnel.

CITY GUARD - Fair enough! The dwelling is determined by its function. But what do you do about the wind when it starts to rain, since your cylinder dwelling lets it go right through?

PANTAGLEIZE - I roll the shade down on my abode. You're searching for?

CITY GUARD - The right expression.

PANTAGLEIZE - Domicile, a hollow object.

CITY GUARD - Perfect! (He writes.) And your profession, citizen?

PANTAGLEIZE - What is the best one in the eyes of the Republic?

CITY GUARD - To be a person of independent means.

PANTAGLEIZE - Put it on record, person of independent means!

CITY GUARD - Yes, but persons of independent means

PANTAGLEIZE - Are well known for eating and drinking till they're satisfied, dressing respectably, not taking their responsibility to the community lightly, and performing no task except the one of

CITY GUARD - All's well. I record, then, occupation none.

PANTAGLEIZE - Then, that I never waste my time.

CITY GUARD - In leisure, that is?

PANTAGLEIZE - No question of it! Are you writing up your report then?

CITY GUARD - Ahem! Not easy. (He reads.) Having summoned the citizen Pantagleize, and the aforesaid acceding to it

PANTAGLEIZE - Write! (He dictates.) I've ascertained de visu that he has taken up a dwelling place outside the city limits and that from this time forth the police are excused from their duties in coming to the outskirts. That, nevertheless, this individual seems careful about hygiene and talks in a rather extraordinary way, but that reveals an ordinary intellect and a normal education. The aforementioned citizen ostensibly presents no

CITY GUARD - Ostensibly I like that word!

PANTAGLEIZE - No danger to the Republic. Accordingly

CITY GUARD - Accordingly, I have fulfilled my mission. But don't be surprised if you get a visit from a braggart dispatched to you by the Senate. A forensic

PANTAGLEIZE - Is he suffering? I bet he's coming for a pan-pan cure.

CITY GUARD - Caution, citizen! His mission is to keep an eye on other peoples' brains!

PANTAGLEIZE - Who's keeping an eye on his?

CITY GUARD - I'm not sure; all my thoughts are turning to Epimanondas!

PANTAGLEIZE - Hurry up! The race has begun!

(The City Guard exits.)

SCENE II

Alone, Pantagleize shrugs his shoulders and picks up his lids. He goes back to banging them and dancing to their unpleasant rhythm.

PANTAGLEIZE - Pan Pin
 Tra la la
 Pan
 Tro la ee
 Pan
 La ee too
 Pan Pan

A pathetic old man enters wearing academic decorations and a patchwork robe. He looks alarmed and shakes his head.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Enough! (Pantagleize stops.) At ease. Talk. Why dance?

PANTAGLEIZE - Understand Latin?

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Latin? A bit. Greek not at all. Rosa the rose; what a memory! But why were you dancing?

PANTAGLEIZE - Mens sana.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Ah yes! In corpore sano! Grand phrase. Why were you singing?

PANTAGLEIZE - It was a way of expressing my joy at being alive, wise old man.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - He's happy to be alive? Seriously! Answer. Use of your time prudent?

PANTAGLEIZE - Eight for rest, eight for meditation, eight for distraction. Comes to twenty-four on all the sundials. I also teach pan-pan on occasion, absolutely gratis!

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Famous, this teaching, science it was, art, this pan-pan was You drink?

PANTAGLEIZE - Water.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Eat?

PANTAGLEIZE - Fruit.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Believe in the gods?

PANTAGLEIZE - In moderation and only on Sundays.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Afraid of folly?

PANTAGLEIZE - The folly of others, infinitely. And their wisdom too!

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Finally, do you ever get any strange ideas? You don't believe you are Jupiter, or Alcibiades, or Plato?

PANTAGLEIZE - Ordinarily, I believe I'm Pantagleize, without being absolutely certain of it.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - No excessive desires?

PANTAGLEIZE - Just to be left alone.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Odd! (He takes out his stiletto.)

PANTAGLEIZE - A report. Is it for military service?

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - No, a little inquiry for the benefit of public tranquility.

PANTAGLEIZE - Bravo! Too many crazy people around

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Precisely! If you only knew!

PANTAGLEIZE - Many? In Athens

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - It's seasonal. The autumnal crazy people are the most dangerous.

PANTAGLEIZE - How do you recognize them? You must have a method, you, being a pathologist.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Certainly! I recognize them by their spirit of contradiction. I use a trick. I claim that I'm composed of three parts. One-third Jupiter, one-third Plato, one-third Alcibiades. You follow?

PANTAGLEIZE - Three-thirds, which make a whole.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - The sane man, like you, agrees.

PANTAGLEIZE - I was just going to congratulate you.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - Do so, congratulate. The lunatic, he dives into an attack of crazy laughter before this layered embodiment of the most immortal entities of immortal Greece. And nevertheless,

PANTAGLEIZE - Nevertheless, how miraculous, how admirable a phenomenon. I'm awestruck at being able to know such a magnificently constructed citizen. (He salutes.)

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST - And me likewise a professor of pan-pan, a comrade, so perspicacious a scholar, so cultivated! (He tips his top hat and leaves.) My report is all taken care of, you know! (He's gone.)

PANTAGLEIZE - Praise be to the gods! (He stretches out in the weeds, face to the sun.)

SCENE III

PANTAGLEIZE - Phoebus, father of all lights, shine on me the same way as you do on any spit, my despised brother.

Star of the day,
King of the zenith
Chariot of the aurora,
Etcetera, etcetera

Light me up outside, but inside as well, since I've got to find a definition for pan-pan which I used to consider a dance for the youth of Athens, which lives at night, when it was modestly supposed to be philosophy, a universal vision, a science auxiliary to the powerful and magnanimous pataphysical wisdom of the future (as the omens reveal to me) and of which Western man will say its (He yawns.) necessity inevitably makes itself felt! (He yawns.) The pan-pan is
The pan¹

(Solar silence. Pantagleize goes to sleep, epitomizing the Just.)

SCENE IV

After a moment, in their cothurni and preceded by their bellies, enter the three Politicians who adorn and enliven the countryside by wearing three loud colors. They circle around the sleeping Pantagleize cautiously, Indian file, then they wink their eyes and, taking pot lids out from under tunics, start beating them in rhythm, a peasant dance devoid of style, which bears a resemblance to elephants attempting a minuet. At last the philosopher wakes up, but as nothing ever surprises him, he rewards the dancers with a glassy glance and nothing more.

PANTAGLEIZE - I'm all right gentlemen. We've seen what you're capable of. A quarter of an hour of that each day, and you'll get so thin you'll start looking like gazelles.

(The three interrupt their dance and bow.)

THREE POLITICIANS - Hurrah! Pantagleize!

PANTAGLEIZE (getting up and bowing) - Merci, bonshommes!

THREE POLITICIANS - How do you support yourself?

PANTAGLEIZE - I don't support myself. The Earth supports me. But what do these prow-like bellies turned in my direction mean? What ceremony?

THREE POLITICIANS - Such bellies are guarantees of reliability, of respectability, of political wisdom.

¹This tirade constitutes a discrete homage to the Father of Pataphysics, Alfred Jarry, to whom all contemporaries owe something.

PANTAGLEIZE - I know you, lovely bellies! And I add. Such bellies manufacture lots of fertilizer for scavengers to feed off throughout the country, what unappreciated colorists. I don't know who Jupiter, Plato, or Alcibiades have acclaimed, but honor to those who encourage culture.

THREE POLITICIANS - Unusual speech! Pantagleize, do you at least know where we stand in the Republic?

PANTAGLEIZE - Three paunches on paws, decorated from the navel up, and perforated from behind. Six buttocks and three faces, all the same as far as their eloquence goes. So say I.

THREE POLITICIANS - The sneak, he's guessed that we were three politicians.

PANTAGLEIZE - We had an idea. But since when is it your policy to leap around to the crashing of cymbals, my dear fellows?

THREE POLITICIANS - We were dancing to get attention. Usually we don't dance; we inspire dancing. What do you say we talk - it's like

PANTAGLEIZE - Talk, I'm listening to you.

(He yawns exaggeratedly. The three seem angry, but resolve to tackle him all the same.)

POLITICIAN I - Pantagleize, I insist that politics, public welfare, is the noblest occupation there is.

POLITICIAN II - Pantagleize, a citizen's concern, first and last, is for the good of the Republic - he therefore takes part in political interests.

POLITICIAN III - Pantagleize, an individual devoid of political know-how seems anti-social to us, deprived, in truth, of human dignity and likewise of the basic instinct for survival. Such a character, if he exists, takes no part in current society. All the citizens of Athens, save one

THREE POLITICIANS (dramatic) - Named Pantagleize, whose example

PANTAGLEIZE - Calm down, Senators. As far as politics go, I shut my eyes to them, as the soldiers say I acknowledge politics; I hold them lower than If you permit me, they are like the gods who watch over your affairs from the very high balconies of Olympus.

THREE POLITICIANS - The very same gods engage in politics, have affairs.

PANTAGLEIZE - Such terminology! To mix up the previously enunciated politics and affairs. The gods, gentlemen of the Senate, only have love affairs and quarrels over protocol. Pretty petty problems, between us. We're not going to be afraid of them any more, regardless of the zincs they wave around sometimes as is their practice.

THREE POLITICIANS - Pantagleize, that's understood. But first and foremost, it's imperative that you know your example is detrimental to the equilibrium and the maintenance of the Republic; your example of public indifference to political matters is highly detrimental. Is it possible that a citizen could live thus, happily, free, and voluntarily exiled from the city of Athens? Outside law and order? So happy that he dances and gives voice to song?

PANTAGLEIZE - But see here, good people. I'm a poet, and you know very well that a poet is as out of place in your Republic as he would be in a kingdom, in an Empire, as he is in any State. The poet chooses the undefined terrain - without any name - on the outskirts. He's a wanderer and a strayabout, erratic and strayabouting, without going so far as to call him a vagabond.

THREE POLITICIANS - But still, even assuming all that, you've got to choose. They're talking, they're talking a great deal about this man who takes no part in politics. And lives with impunity outside our programs, our promises.

PANTAGLEIZE - And what if mine were the party of hopelessness, of those who don't expect anything beyond themselves, and secondarily from Jupiter?

THREE POLITICIANS - Impracticable! Adhere, O Pantagleize to one of Athen's three opinions.

PANTAGLEIZE - So three truths exist in Athens, three wisdoms? And what do you get from adhering to one of these policies when you can't even tell if it's wisdom or if all three aren't mad? A belly?

THREE POLITICIANS - The esteem of the Republic, and ours.

PANTAGLEIZE - I will meditate on this. Come back in seven years.

THREE POLITICIANS - Were we asking you to give up your Pan-pan? Well promulgate that instead of the three authorized opinions. You adhere to that, different maybe, but at least you've got one.

PANTAGLEIZE - I propose that my opinion is not to have any.

THREE POLITICIANS - Impossible! You're dragging us toward anarchy! Seek and find - for the sake of good citizenship - invent! An opinion, in the name of the gods, obnoxious, inappropriate, but an opinion!

PANTAGLEIZE - Wait! It'll come to me.

THREE POLITICIANS - If words fail you, gestures will suffice.

PANTAGLEIZE - Yes. I'll be brief. I'll speak to you from my home which has the proper atmosphere. I'll talk to you by onomatopoeia. I ask you for a minute of silence. I'll offer you the crystal clear pantagleizian opinion.

(He bends over the pipe and creeps into it, then disappears completely. A stern silence. The politicians discretely rejoice and wait.)

THREE POLITICIANS - We triumph! He yields! Fifty seven
fifty eight fifty nine

(They bend toward the orifice of the pipe and recoil, for a terrible explosion shakes the air and knocks them over.)

PAN

POLITICIAN I - Horror! This opinion

POLITICIAN II - Cynicism! This onoma

POLITICIAN III - Splattered God! This stench . . .

THREE POLITICIANS (arms to the sky) - We've been made a mock of! And the city of Athens will have staggered from the blow! O gods! What an evil wind is wafting over our institutions!

(They leave in a panic, devastated.)

A silence. From far away, a disturbed dog barks. A second. A third. Ten dogs. Twenty dogs. One hundred dogs. A whole chorale, a contata of upset dogs answer - all the dogs in Greece. This lasts a good while, but if the barking choir is well conducted, the spectator could derive some enjoyment from it. By and by, the dogs abate and silence is restored.

FINAL SCENE

The Aunt Jujube enters. She gets down on four paws before one of the openings of the pipe.

AUNT JUJUBE - Woof-woof?

PANTAGLEIZE (Sticking his head out) - Whoof? (He gets out of the pipe and bows.) Mrs. Woof-woof?

AUNT JUJUBE - Jujube, lady with the dogs. Is this Pan-pan?

PANTAGLEIZE - It's me, Pan-pan or Whoof-whoof. If we can hear each other

AUNT JUJUBE - O, great little man, come.

PANTAGLEIZE - Come where?

AUNT JUJUBE - To my heart.

PANTAGLEIZE - And then?

AUNT JUJUBE - Far away from here!

PANTAGLEIZE - Why lady?

AUNT JUJUBE - The dogs told me! They're oracles. You're in danger, you, the inventor of Pan-pan. Come, I'll be your beloved disciple, as I was the widow of many poets.

PANTAGLEIZE - One moment.

AUNT JUJUBE - No such thing. Listen, the dogs.

DOGS - Whoof - whoof - whoof!

PANTAGLEIZE - Good dogs, lady.

AUNT JUJUBE - Hush! Police! Carry away your goods.

PANTAGLEIZE - My goods and body equal just me. I carry myself away.

AUNT JUJUBE - No, I'm carrying you! It's uncertain terrain, where sunflower and more than uncertain. Adieu Athens!

PANTAGLEIZE - Go ahead. You're inspired by the gods! Adieu Athens! And your Acropolis. Run, fly, my beloved disciple, go by Icarus' wings, by Mercury's trick, by the

(The Matron has already siezed Pantagleize and hoisted him onto her robust shoulders. She tries out a dance step: Pan-pan and disappears, leaping like a doe. At which point, without transition, the City Guard returns.)

CITY GUARD - I'm sure I saw him leave, but there was no need to hurry. The chief said to go carefully. And besides, Epimanondas won his race. (He takes himself seriously.) In the name of the Law. (Silence.) Citizen Pantagleize? (Silence.) No answer, no word of obedience? Absent from his dwelling. (He writes.) Gone without leaving an address. (He smiles contentedly, sure of having done his duty, and says to the public:) He was truly charming, and I have no doubt that you'll be glad to see him come back in a future play! (He salutes and leaves.)

(CURTAIN)

APPENDIX A

TRANSFIGURATION IN THE CIRCUS

by Michel de Ghelderode

1927

Translated by David Willinger

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CAST

THE MANAGER

LUNA, The Pure Equestrienne

MISTER CLOWN

AUGUST

BABYLAS

PICCOLO

DUDULE

CASIMIR

POLICEMEN

This play is set in a circus.

The Ring

Two Entrances

Trapeze Equipment

up by the vaulted ceiling.

The band plays a muted gentle march. Electric buzzers. The Manager rushes in, bustling.

MANAGER - No. 5! Mister Clown, king of the buffoons, in an original routine! . . . Hey there! Mister Clown! . . . Must be on his way! . . . The honorable public will excuse me! Mister Clown! Ah, these prima donnas! . . . Hey there, all clowns. . . . August! . . . Dudule! . . . Babylas! . . . Casimir! . . . Piccolo! . . . (In the wings.) Babylas! . . . Casimir! . . . Piccolo! . . .

MANAGER - Orchestra, quiet! . . . (The band stops.) What does this mean! . . . No more clowns! . . . What is going to become of me! . . . Will the honorable public survive without the clown? Mister Clown, one last time, are you going to begin your act? . . . My patience is at an end! . . . (He deposits himself in front of one of the entrances. Mister Clown appears from the opposite entrance and mockingly deposits himself behind the manager. Seeing Mister Clown enter, the band leader strikes up the gentle march. The manager roars:)

- Orchestra, quiet! . . . (The music ceases.) I'm going to refund the money! . . . (To the public.) You see me desperate. . . . Ladies, Gentlemen! . . . For who could take the place of Mister Clown! . . . Yet he can't be far away! . . . (Cupping his hands like a megaphone.) Mister Clo-o-o-own! . . .

MISTER CLOWN (imitating him) - Mister Clo-o-o-own!! . . .

MANAGER (stupified) - There you are! . . . Where were you? . . .

MISTER CLOWN - Where you were! . . .

MANAGER - I was here! . . .

MISTER CLOWN - Me too! . . .

MANAGER - Don't joke! . . .

MISTER CLOWN - Good, good! I'll be on my way! . . .

MANAGER - I mean. . . . joke! . . . Start your act! . . .

MISTER CLOWN - Why? . . .

MANAGER - It's your turn! . . .

MISTER CLOWN - It's my turn? . . . I heard that somebody was playing the fool in the ring, so I didn't think my turn had come yet! . . .

MANAGER - The fool is you! Will you begin?

MISTER CLOWN - I don't know how to be a clown tonight. . . .

MANAGER - Why?

MISTER CLOWN - Because I'm cheerful!

MANAGER - And what are you so cheerful about?

MISTER CLOWN - Because I will never work again!

MANAGER - You'll never work again? And your routine?

MISTER CLOWN - But this is it: Mister Clown doesn't want to work anymore!

MANAGER - And who is going to entertain the honorable public?

MISTER CLOWN - You!

MANAGER - Me?

MISTER CLOWN - Yes! You are going to play the fool!

MANAGER - Oh no! That's not my job! I could never manage to do that!

MISTER CLOWN - Just be natural and it'll happen all by itself!

MANAGER - I refuse!

MISTER CLOWN - I will force you to do it!

MANAGER - I'd like to see you try!

MISTER CLOWN - Look! (He draws a dangerous horse pistol from his pocket.)

MANAGER (terrified) - Mister Clown. . . . My dear Mister Clown, what do you mean by this!

MISTER CLOWN - I am going to kill you! And I sincerely hope that you're not going to refuse to play the fool after this little warning!

MANAGER - Your pistol isn't loaded!

MISTER CLOWN - That's right! How do you load it? (He takes out a cap.)

MANAGER (grabbing the pistol and the cap) - You grasp the cartridge between the thumb and the index finger. . . . You put it in the thingamajig. . . . That's it!

MISTER CLOWN - And to kill, what do you do?

MANAGER - You're going to find out! You aim at the victim (He aims at Mister Clown.) At the heart? At the head? At the stomach? Where do you want?

MISTER CLOWN - I'm going to give it some thought! And then?

MANAGER - Then you count. One!

MISTER CLOWN - I understand! Two! Four! (He looks around him.) Where's the victim?

MANAGER (pulling the trigger) - What! Odd pistol!

MISTER CLOWN - The problem's with us whose arithmetic isn't so hot! Hand it over! (He takes the pistol and aims it at the manager.) I've got it It will be in the stomach! Count, please?

MANAGER - Five. . . . Six. . . . Seven. . . . Eight. . . .

MISTER CLOWN - Continue! (He puts the pistol in his pocket.)

MANAGER - Nine. . . . Ten. . . . Eleven. . . . Twelve. . . . Thirteen. . . . Aren't you going to kill me?

MISTER CLOWN - When you've finished counting! Are there a lot more numbers in arithmetic?

MANAGER - Enough. . . . Twenty five. . . . Twenty six. . . . I'm wrong! Is it all right to start over? One. . . . Two. . . . Three! (Gun shot in pants of Mister Clown, who drops dead.)

MISTER CLOWN (on the ground) - Don't count anymore, please!

MANAGER - Are you going to work now?

MISTER CLOWN - I am dead!!

MANAGER (to the band) - Strike up a funeral march!

MISTER CLOWN (takes advantage of the manager's back being turned by slipping the reloaded pistol into the pocket of his morning coat, then he lies back down) - Not too sad with the funeral march, Mister Conductor, I have a soft heart!

MANAGER (to Mister Clown, sententious) - See what happens!

MISTER CLOWN (to the band) - Stop! (Sitting up.) Mister Manager, I have been well punished! Which was the fatal number which brought about my death!

MANAGER - Three! (Gun shot in the pocket of the manager, who falls down dead.)

MISTER CLOWN - (standing - to the band) - Continue the funeral march! (To the Manager.) I see what happens! (He runs to one of the entrance ways to the circus.) Babylas! Dudule! Casimir! Piccolo! August!

(The manager gets on his feet and makes a discreet getaway for the opposite entrance, rubbing his behind. The band stops playing the funeral march and resumes the gentle march. The five clowns enter, leaping.)

THE FIVE CLOWNS - Long live Mister Clown! Hurrah!

MISTER CLOWN - Conscious clowns of all descriptions, wily and dumb. . . . Come and see! I have killed the manager!

BABYLAS - Where is he?

MISTER CLOWN - In the middle of the ring!

(All run to the middle of the ring and search.)

PICCOLO - He isn't there!

MISTER CLOWN - Look well!

AUGUST - Just a trace of his backside is still in the sand! He's gone!

MISTER CLOWN - That is of no importance since he's dead! Clowns! Come! To work!

PICCOLO - No!

MISTER CLOWN - Yes!

BABYLAS - No, no!

MISTER CLOWN - Yes, yes!

AUGUST - No, no, no!

MISTER CLOWN - Yes, yes, yes!

DUDULE - No, no, no, no!

MISTER CLOWN - Yes, yes, yes, yes!

CASIMIR - No, no, no, no, no!

MISTER CLOWN - Why!

AUGUST - The manager is dead! The clowns are free

MISTER CLOWN - I beg your pardon! It's not a matter of working for the public, but of starting the revolution!

DUDULE - After the revolution, will we be circus managers?

MISTER CLOWN - Are you dumb, Dudule? We're going to start by doing our act!

CASIMIR - None of that! Doing our act is work!

MISTER CLOWN - Not at all! Since the routine is entitled: Mister Clown doesn't want to work!

PICCOLO - No more for us! (To the clowns.) In this act Mister Clown won't have to work, but I, Piccolo, I will have to work!

CASIMIR - And I, Casimir!

DUDULE - And I, Dudule!

BABYLAS - And I, Babybas!

AUGUST - And I, August!

MISTER CLOWN - My word of honor, you won't have to work!

AUGUST - Then what do we have to do?

MISTER CLOWN - Nothing!

PICCOLO - How do you do that?

MISTER CLOWN - What?

PICCOLO - Nothing!

MISTER CLOWN - You sit comfortably! And you tell the others who're doing nothing: Courage!

CASIMIR - And why do you say that?

MISTER CLOWN - Because you have worked or you're going to work? To have worked is in the past. To work is in the future! To sit and do nothing is the present!

DUDULE - And how do things get stuck so that it's never the past or the future, but always the present!

MISTER CLOWN - Well, you sit down and you stay sitting!

DUDULE - Ah!

MISTER CLOWN - Seated you feel that you're not past, you aren't future You are present!

PICCOLE - And if I go somewhere?

MISTER CLOWN - Then you are absent! Everyone go sit down!
. . . .

(The five clowns install themselves on the edge of the ring. Silence. The band stops.)

(Mister Clown takes out his watch.)

BABYLAS - Is this not doing anything going to go on for very long?
. . . .

MISTER CLOWN - Five to go! In five minutes the revolution breaks out! (He sits in the middle of the ring.)

DUDULE (calling out) - Courage?

MISTER CLOWN - Are you telling me courage?

DUDULE - Absolutely! As for us, our job is to do nothing!
. . . .

MISTER CLOWN - You're right! I'm going to start a manifesto!
. . . . (He gets up.)

CASIMIR - Why?

MISTER CLOWN - Because you can't have a revolution without a manifesto!

BABYLAS (calling out) - Courage!

MISTER CLOWN - Who are you saying that to?

BABYLAS - To whoever's going to listen to you!

CASIMIR - I know how to have a revolution without a manifesto!

MISTER CLOWN - How?

CASIMIR - Give me the floor!

MISTER CLOWN - No, no! Me only, I will speak!

PICCOLO - You'll speak! You want to be a star!
That's why you're making us do nothing!

AUGUST - I'm registering a complaint against the entire way the act:
Mister Clown doesn't want to work anymore is being conducted!
Let him take a break!

MISTER CLOWN - After I've done my manifesto and declared the revolution!
. . . . (He looks at his watch.)

BABYLAS - Where is the manifesto?

MISTER CLOWN (searching his pockets) - I can no longer find the
thread of it! (He searches again, brings out a thread at
the end of which is a little paper.) Here it is!

THE FIVE CLOWNS - Hush! Shush! Hush!

MISTER CLOWN - I cough! (He coughs.) And I begin!
(All at once.) My beloved Clown, I will meet you at ten o'clock
exactly in the middle of the ring, your pure horsewoman who adores
you! (He coughs.)

AUGUST - That, that's a declaration of love!

MISTER CLOWN - Revolutionary manifestoes are declarations of love!
Let me read you the rest! (He turns the paper over.) The
circle of the ring is the world. . . . Mister Clown is at the center
of it!

BABYLAS - Silence in the center! Does Mister Clown care to
explain this manifesto?

MISTER CLOWN - It is symbolic! The beloved clown is the
revolutionary! Meet at ten o'clock, that is the time of
the revolution! The pure horsewoman who adores her beloved
clown, that is the revolution!

DUDULE (aside) - It is of the feminine gender!

MISTER CLOWN - One to go! Watch out! Since there are
four exit doors to the circus, and since there are four of you, you
are going to shut the doors. . . . And the fifth will empty the
cash box!

CASIMIR - And the manifesto?

MISTER CLOWN - When the revolution is over! I name you all ministers!

AUGUST - Of what?

MISTER CLOWN - Of finance, if you bring back the cash box!

CASIMIR - And I?

MISTER CLOWN - You are a musical clown? I name you minister of the fine arts!

DUDULE - And I?

MISTER CLOWN - You're an acrobat on the high wire? I name you minister of international affairs!

PICCOLO - And I?

MISTER CLOWN - You, you're a sword swallower. . . . I name you minister of war!

BABYLAS - And I?

MISTER CLOWN - What do you do in the circus?

BABYLAS - I help to roll up the carpets as I walk on them, I run around the ring, I shout, and when the others have rolled up the carpets, I brush off my costume!

MISTER CLOWN - You are the minister of work! Go clown ministers!

(The five clowns disperse and exit. Mister Clown looks at his watch.)
Minus zero!

(The band plays a muted langorous waltz. Mister Clown kneels on the ground. Luna, the pure equestrienne, enters. She dances on her toes and spins around Mister Clown, who is bewitched.)

LUNA - Hello Mister Clown!

MISTER CLOWN - Miss Luna, moon of beauty in the sky of my passion, I kneel before your lunar charms!

LUNA - How nice he is! Speak my little Clown, I heard that you're doing a sensational act tonight!

MISTER CLOWN - Oui, my angel! The revolution!

LUNA - Oh! Nasty thing! (She looks around her.) And where is the revolution?

MISTER CLOWN - In my heart!

LUNA - Oh! Silly Are you a revolutionary then?

MISTER CLOWN - Revolutionized! Miss!

LUNA - Oh! Flatterer! And your credo, tell me about that?

MISTER CLOWN - I love you!

LUNA - You're ambitious!

MISTER CLOWN - Amorous! I'm starting the revolution for you!

LUNA - And when you've finished it?

MISTER CLOWN - You will love me!

LUNA - Why?

MISTER CLOWN - Because I will start a coup d'etat! I will become emperor of the clowns. . . . And you will be empress! All circuses will belong to me!

LUNA - It's perfect! Of course I'll love you! Good luck!

MISTER CLOWN - My dream Luna! Moon at the zenith of happiness to come Oh my future!

(Luna dances out. Mister Clown sends kisses to her. The waltz stops.)

MISTER CLOWN (standing) - Hey orchestra! A military march! (To the public.) Ladies, Gentlemen! The revolution has begun! (Beating of a bass drum.) I'm stripping myself of my antiquated notions and my antiquated repertoire. I am a new clown!

(Drum roll. Mister Clown does a series of somersaults. Then:)

MISTER CLOWN - Silence, orchestra! Now, I am going to get the radio to announce the revolution of the universal circus! (He runs out. Babylas, delirious with joy, comes in from the same entrance that Luna used.)

BABYLAS - I ran into the revolution! Whee! The lovely child!
 It's too bad that she has such principles! But she told me,
 "My little Babylas, I know that you're going to become a revolution-
 ary! Proclaim yourself emperor and I become your wife!!!
 Wow! (He does pirouettes.)

PICCOLO (appearing from the same entrance) - Ah! How good she smelled!
 She lured me into a corner and told me, My little Piccolo . . .
 Wow! My heart got a shock!

BABYLAS (who has heard him, gives him a kick in the behind) - Sorry!

PICCOLO - Aiee! The little shock! (He kicks Babylas
 back.)

BABYLAS - My heart!

PICCOLO - How's it going Babylas? You know that we've got to
 start the revolution!

BABYLAS - Mister Clown isn't here!

PICCOLO - We're clowns too! We can start the revolution
 without him!

BABYLAS - Absolutely! Don't tire yourself out, Piccolo, I will do it
 myself!

PICCOLO - No, no, me, I'll do it!

(Enter Dudule, glowing.)

DUDULE - The electricity of her look has struck me, a lightning bolt
 on the lightning rod of my feeling! She told me, "Oh my little
 Dudule, you are the funniest of the clowns"

PICCOLO (furious with Dudule) - I bet that your heart got a little
 shock!

DUDULE - I've been betrayed! No, no no little
 shock! Out. Babylas kicks Dudule who gives it back to Babylas
 and Piccolo who kicks the behinds of the other two. Panic.)

BABYLAS - Enough little shocks. . . . It's more than our clown hearts
 can stand!

(Enter Casimir, lit up.)

CASIMIR - She told me. . . . My little Casimir. . . . As much of a
 funny man as you are, you're bound to become a king. . . .

(Babylas, Dudule, and Piccolo set out in pursuit of him.)

THE THREE - Hey! Casimir! Listen!

CASIMIR (fleeing, holding his behind) - I'm sick at heart!

(Enter August, indifferent, who walks on the edge of the ring.)

AUGUST - This is odd. . . . Everyone in love would rather give the little shock than get it! But me, to me she said My little August, you aren't an idiot! I'm not asking you to become emperor, only to betray the others. . . . I'm not saying that I'll be your wife, but I will bestow my favors on you!

THE FOUR (hurtling toward August) - August! Your heart!

AUGUST (calm) - I'm so unpoetical!

(Bewilderment from the four.)

PICCOLO - You haven't run into anyone?

AUGUST - Yes, the cashier! I robbed her! We're going to start the revolution right now!

BABYLAS - Let's start! Who's the boss?

PICCOLO - Me!

CASIMIR - Not you, me!

BABYLAS - Neither one, nor the other me!

DUDULE - I suggest me!

AUGUST - We have to enter a contest the winner of the ring race I will be the judge!

BABYLAS - What contest is this?

AUGUST - To start a revolution is to set the world on its head. Since one of you will have to control the world, he'll have to know how to live upside down. . . . The first who succeeds in standing on his hands is the champion!

THE FOUR - Very good! (They put their legs in the air, one next to the other.)

AUGUST - Attention!

CASIMIR - Do we have to start with the left leg?

AUGUST - I'm counting to three. . . .

(Din resounding in the wings. The clowns collapse and tremble with fear.)

THE FOUR - Help! The revolution! Help!
 (Mister Clown enters, dragging a strange apparatus mounted on wheels: boxes, ropes, canned food, lamp glasses. This is the wireless radio. The clowns stay stock still. Mister Clown installs his apparatus in the center of the ring and arranges it. Then:)

MISTER CLOWN - Orchestra, silence! (To the clowns.) Comrade Clowns. The Revolution is declared! Proletarians of the circus, slaves to public opinion, dawn is breaking! You're going to swear loyalty to me. . . . Whoever doesn't go along, I will shoot! Cry out: Long live liberty and liberated clowns! (He takes out a billy club which he shakes.)

THE CLOWNS - Long live liberty and Mister Clown with his billy club!

MISTER CLOWN - Very good! I'm going to announce the clown liberation to the world! This is my radio apparatus, which prevents all other apparatuses from working! (He fiddles around with the apparatus.) I'm going to start it up!

AUGUST - I forgot to tell you that I have the money! Should we split it up? This is a touching moment!

MISTER CLOWN - Go carry that money to the bank! (Mister Clown listens to the boxes of canned food, and acts like a technician.)

(August runs out, but soon returns provided with various accessories: phonograph speaker, horn, roll of cord, whistles. He hides behind the edge of the ring and tosses the cord onto the radio apparatus.)

MISTER CLOWN - I'm beginning! Hallo! The great circus of Europe here. The clowns are the masters of the situation! Clowns of all nations, unite. . . . Assassinate the managers! The universe goes to the clowns! Be a clown or die! (To the clowns.) Applaud!

THE CLOWNS (in chorus) - Long live the revolution!

MISTER CLOWN - Hallo! Have you received my message?

THE RADIO APPARATUS (via the interception of August) - Quack! Quack! brrr! sshoof! Boom!

(Siren and whistle finish off the response.)

MISTER CLOWN - Listen. . . . This is the revolution. . . .

BABYLAS - Ask them for a translation!

MISTER CLOWN - Hallo! Clowns! What was your answer?
. . . .

THE RADIO APPARATUS (via the interception of August. Speaking tube) -
That all the managers were killed! The imbeciles were locked up in
the circuses and are waiting for us to decide their fate!

MISTER CLOWN (to the clowns) - What are we going to do to the imbe-
ciles?

CASIMIR - In the first place, we've got to know if there are more of
them!

MISTER CLOWN (transmitting) - Hallo! What is the total population of
the world, not including clowns?

RADIO APPARATUS - Hallo! 3,741,975,427,092,510,295,321 and 25!

MISTER CLOWN - And two fifths! Thank you! Clown
Comrades, what to do about the imbeciles?

THE CLOWNS (in chorus) - Kill them!

MISTER CLOWN (transmitting) - Hallo. . . . They must be murdered, but
not all of them! Keep some specimens, for you can't do without im-
beciles altogether! Save the least idiotic ones!

THE RADIO APPARATUS - Roger! Should we start by ones, tens,
hundreds. . . .

MISTER CLOWN - Begin by taking away their purses! Good
night! (To the clowns.) Do you really want to proclaim me
boss supreme?

(He raises his billy club.)

THE CLOWNS (in chorus) - Long live the supreme boss with his billy
club. . . .

THE RADIO APPARATUS - 1 object!

MISTER CLOWN - Impudent! (Billy club blow on the apparatus.)

THE RADIO APPARATUS - Ay, ay, ay! I won't anymore!

MISTER CLOWN - And since I'm the boss, I'm going to get married!
 In a few seconds, you will acclaim me the chosen one of the free federated
 clowns! (Transmitting.) Hallo! My love!
 Luna. . . .

THE RADIO APPARATUS - Rahrhrrahrrahrrah! Quack!
 Quack! Boom!

MISTER CLOWN - She's so happy, it's delirious!

BABYLAS - They're the screams of the imbeciles soon to be exe-
 cuted!

MISTER CLOWN - Hello, Luna. . . . You promised to love me!
 I'm the boss!

THE RADIO APPARATUS - Miss Luna is busy!

MISTER CLOWN - With what, please!

RADIO APPARATUS - I'm going to contact her dressing room!

(The four clowns squirm. Billy club.)

MISTER CLOWN - Silence! I hear her voice!

(He kneels on the ground.)

THE RADIO APPARATUS (woman's voice via the intercession of August) -
 I love you. . . . I adore you. . . . I'm crazy about you!

MISTER CLOWN - Divine music!

THE RADIO APPARATUS - My dear little manager! We're going
 to massacre all those villainous funny men who imagine I love them!
 After, we'll get married! I want to kiss your waxed
 moustache! I detest clean-shaven men!

MISTER CLOWN - Goodness gracious. . . . I've been betrayed!

THE FOUR CLOWNS (in chorus) - We've been betrayed!

BABYLAS - Not to mention cuckolded!

MISTER CLOWN - Not you! Me! The pure bareback rider's
 cheating on me with the manager!

CASIMIR - So, the manager wasn't so dead after all?

MISTER CLOWN - He was pretending!

PICCOLO - Perhaps he's pretending to cheat on you!

MISTER CLOWN - No! It's possible to fake death, but not love! (He cries.) I've been screwed! And the revolution, she's been screwed!

(He demolishes the radio apparatus by kicking it.)

THE FOUR CLOWNS (in chorus) - The revolution is dead, long live the revolution!

MISTER CLOWN - You've all betrayed me! We're going to perish together, absurd clowns, painted clowns! You don't deserve liberty! (He exits, shaking his fists.)

BABYLAS - One less boss! We're going to start a revolution on our own! Quick, the radio apparatus must be repaired!

DUDULE - Let's fix it! This is the transmitting station of phony news! (They work on the apparatus.)

PICCOLO - This string, what is this? A wired wireless!

(The four pull. August rolls around in the ring with his accessories.)

CASIMIR - It's August! Wasn't he at the bank?

AUGUST - I was listening to the stock market!

PICCOLO - Then, you are the voice of universal clowns and of the pure cuckold!

AUGUST - That's me! But I didn't tell the truth! I was wrong by seven in the total number of imbeciles! As for the pure bareback rider, she was having a try at fortune telling! She's just waiting for one of us to be master! I've succeeded in debunking Mister Clown, who was the most pretentious. . . . We're going to see who'll be the boss from now on! (He runs to the entrance and comes back with four pairs of boxing gloves which he hands out to the four clowns.) For you're all dying to be boss, and each is prepared to betray the other! There is, however, one amongst us to whom Miss Luna has promised her love! Luna hopes that he will be the winner! She gave me a little flower for him to put on!

(He takes out the flower which he displays.)

THE FOUR CLOWNS - It's for me! No, for me! Luna's for me! The flower for me!

(August eats it.)

(Free-for-all. The four clowns box, howl, roll in the sand, pirouette. Beating of bass drum.)

(One after the other: Casimir, Piccolo, Dudule fall, knocked out and cry hot tears; Babylas continues to box by himself in the empty space. August gives him a kick in the behind. Babylas is knocked out in his turn. Concert of tears.)

BABYLAS - This is a craft no longer. . . . I resign from being a revolutionary!

AUGUST - Silence! You're all knocked out! (The clowns stiffen.)

(August puts on white gloves and a crush hat that he had in his pocket and leaves triumphantly.)

They're dead. I, I am the victor! Luna, I go to seek out my reward! (Exit.)

BABYLAS (getting up) - Once again we've been betrayed!
 Brothers, clowns. . . . Death must come! Which is no problem! They'll see that clowns know how to die!
 Piccolo, you're going to murder Casimir! Dudule, you're going to murder Piccolo! Me, I'm going to murder Dudule!

PICCOLE - And you, who is going to murder you?

BABYLAS - I, to avenge you all, I'm going to get even with August, the traitor who will find me in the arms of the pure bareback rider. He'll kill me in order to soak his honor in my blood!

CASIMIR - That's very good! Farewell, Piccolo!

PICCOLO - Farewell Casimir, take courage!

DUDULE - Farewell, Babylas. . . . See you!

BABYLAS - Farewell, Dudule, I'm mourning! We will meet each other in the celestial circus. . . . Clowns in the stars!

(They kiss. August reenters, bawling.)

AUGUST - Hoohah! I've been betrayed! Luna didn't open the door, the manager did. . . . Oh, my eye! Poor clowns that we are! These managers have it all over us!

CASIMIR - Let's kill ourselves, yes or no! What method should we use to commit suicide?

AUGUST - How about tickling the bottoms of your feet!

BABYLAS - Highly recommended! Let's start with August, since he betrayed us!

AUGUST - I will never go along with it! (They pursue him.)
Help!

THE FOUR CLOWNS - Death to the traitor! Vengeance! (August is recaptured. They lay him on the ground and take one shoe off. The four clowns gently collapse one after the other.)

AUGUST - What is this that they're (He puts his shoe back on.) I'm going to inform the doctor! (He wants to leave, but returns horrified.) This time we're going to die for real! Brothers, get up!

BABYLAS (coming over to him) - Ah! Death to this good-for-nothing!
.

AUGUST - Alert! The assassin!

(The five clowns flee bewildered. Mister Clown makes his appearance. He's dragging an enormous bomb on which is written, "Dynamite, very dangerous.")

MISTER CLOWN - And this is it for us! There'll be nothing left of all the clowns but some little scraps!

(He sits down on the bomb.)

BABYLAS - Where are you coming from! We thought you were dead!

MISTER CLOWN - I've been making the bomb! We're going to die! This will be a resounding finish!

PICCOLO - And the revolution!

MISTER CLOWN - It goes well! All the imbeciles are going up in this explosion with us!

AUGUST - Couldn't you do a manifesto instead of this feature?

MISTER CLOWN - It's too late! Clowns forever!
Get ready! (He turns to the starting handle.)

THE FIVE CLOWNS - Be cautious! Kill the anarchist. . . .
(They hide, one behind the other, and kneel.)

MISTER CLOWN - What? It isn't going off! (He gives the bomb a few big kicks.) I hear a little sound inside!

AUGUST - Wait! (He runs out and comes back with a blacksmith's hammer.) In this life you've got to lend a hand!

MISTER CLOWN - Merci! All set for the catastrophe!
(He recites.) Love! What misunderstandings in your name!

Clowns, let's die a clown's death! Let's do it without tragedy!
 Tragedy is for the imbeciles! For the millionaire managers,
 the ecstatic sweethearts! Jokes and shenanigans for us!
 Long live the assassinated clowns!

(He strikes the starting handle on the bomb. Small fire cracker sound.
 The bomb opens up. Out comes: The manager armed with a whip. The
 clowns fall in a faint.)

THE MANAGER (running into the ring) - Orchestra, go! Triumphant
 march!

THE CLOWNS (deflated) - The reaction!

(All die out. The bareback rider enters, on a horse. She circles the
 ring juggling flaming torches. The manager hands over his whip. Police-
 men wearing little cardboard horses charge the clowns. The manager
 climbs onto the equestrienne's horse.)

THE MANAGER - Massacre the clowns! It's the end of funny
 men!

LUNA - Long live blood! Down with sentimental clowns!
 (Rifle fire. The equestrienne flings her torches aside. The manager
 comes down from the horse and carries Luna in his arms. Complete
 darkness. The vaulted ceiling of the circus lit up. The band stops.
 The six clowns fly on the bars and trapezes, soaring like spirits in a
 bluish glow. The band is playing the gentle march as it did at the
 beginning.)

LUNA (in the manager's arms) - The pretty clowns in the clouds!
 But I prefer the worldly ring, and your waxed moustache, oh my handsome
 manager!

APPENDIX A

DREAMS DROWNING

A Plastic Poem by Michel de Ghelderode

1928

Translated by David Willinger

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DRAMATIC CHARACTERS

the diver

the dealer in shipwrecks

BALLET CHARACTERS

atlanta

the explorer towards the east

the old king

the monk

the sea beggar

the bewigged pirate

the siren

the drowned actress

the aviator

the young sailor

reciting: the octopus

PROLOGUE

setting: blue sky
 gray sea
 downstage: black wrecked ship

on the pontoon, the diver, a large metal man, still, the wreck dealer in red oilcloth, jerky. The sun plays on the diver's metal.

the dealer Are you listening? This was a sculpted ship with an unusual structure, which ordinarily wouldn't sink in a storm, but because it had such an arrogant appearance, the sea gods took vengeance on it, coiling the winds around it in circles. It contained so much gold that it sank like a stone!

the diver There are so many wrecks at the bottom of the mud, so many stories in the old books! I'll find shipwrecks and men there, but no gold. Why don't you get rich from exploring the seas? The sea gives back nothing. No one knows exactly what it holds; its fish the most fabulous, its plants the strangest, its secret landscapes still remain unknown!

the dealer If you mistrust me, why do you still want to go back down?

the diver I'm going down because I'm bored with continental horizons, because I'd rather take the plunge into the sea than gaze at the shore. Even if there's no gold to be discovered in the sludge, there's still a chance that I'll be witness to underwater dreams, for there are encyclopedic mirrors quivering in the waters.

the dealer I hired a diver, not a dreamer. My goals are practical!

the diver Your goals are fanciful! You're much more magical than I! You think of yourself as an industrialist, when you're really just a dazed madman, a sleepwalker! Your brain is papered with stories you've heard! If you had such a head for business, you'd be selling India rubber or frozen meat. What good does it do you to track down and fish up hypothetical treasures?

the dealer

Are you affirming that there's no buried treasure in the waters? What about all the battles, collisions, wars, disasters? This ship was on its way from the Americas, and was carrying all the gold of Eldorado to the king of Spain. There were gold statues, gold weapons, completely golden hardware from the religions they have over there. A great scholar confirms it. He begins his account this way: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I find this really ridiculous! Go on down and explore the wreck. It's right under our feet. I alone knew how to locate it. What are you waiting for?

the diver

A torpor is coming over me. It's the water! The water has an extraordinary perfume.

He puts on his mask. The dealer tightens the screws. The diver goes slowly down into the sea. The light dims gradually...).

BALLET

Under water. Aquarium lighting, emerald green.
 Silent silence: muted echoes.
 Play of climbing bubbles.
 The water is moving.
 Contains panoramic
 images.
 Succession of forests with din of
 magic lantern.

a
 sha-
 dow
 de-
 scends:
 The
 di-
 verThe water is agitated.
 Changes from green
 to ocher.

At the right,
 black and
 shining like
 an enormous
 flower,
 with two
 electric
 light bulb eyes
 the octopus
 quivers
 One of its
 tentacles
 holds
 a shell as if
 it were a loudspeaker.
 This octopus is
 reciting into it and
 its multiple buddha
 and bandleader arms,
 are conducting his story.

The diver recoils at the sight.

But the Octopus speaks, emphatically and hollowly, a moist baritone:

I, the most venerable octopus in the ocean, scorned of animals because of my unique shape, my murkiness, am held in greater suspicion than the shark. I, the original tentacular, on the outskirts of all fauna, I'm too much of a celebrity to concern myself with the social plight of sardines or sponges. Ever since the twentieth century, I've taken my place in literature, and in a purely contemplative way, I watch over the slumber of polyparies, the march of the crayfish brigades, a far cry from the tiny fried fish, preserved jelly fish, bearded shrimp. I won't suck the marrow out of you, diver with the huge head, knight or pioneer, although I am fond of rotten skull matter, genius paste! But you didn't come down, by Hercules, just to covet the bric-a-brac of the mouldy shipwrecks, whose inventories I hold. You come in search of a spectacle? Octopii go in for a bit of procuring! Diver plunging in after drowned dreams, rejoice in your leather skin and shake your articulated limbs as a sign of appreciation. The water contains more movie screens than you could imagine. The sea is full of actors, sets, adventures. It's only essential that you have two convex eyes in your head, as you do, you monster, you fairy tale plunderer. My countless arms direct the marvel! Hydraulic power raises the curtains on the oceanic stage, a theatre of crystal, a spherical music hall . . . An oceanic hardware store. Ageless machinery. From underneath the grotto, singing is a prelude for the creation of the world, an absolutely sublime theme that you're not going to grasp since it means nothing, being sufficient unto itself, as am I, the octopus, who have neither principles nor prejudices. Do you like this atmosphere? This smell that you're inhaling is the oldest on earth. It and walrus language, comprehensible all the way to Heaven, exist at new densities belonging to others' muses. Here is the gramophone that perished as it sang, salted harmony! Now is the moment, diver, to think no more, if you've got the knack, to sleep on your feet if you know how, to dream a dream

(He turns on the gramophone. Music comes from far away --)

The diver sits to the left
of the stage.

The waters light up
Cut-outs, fish file past.
The sea-bed disintegrates:

Apparitions:

A sun, egg-yolk yellow, shines, disintegrates, and
colors the sea. Play of bubbles, black,
this time, on the yellow sea-bed.

Then, emanating from the sun,
remote city, towers and
beacons. It blurs out;

A silver current cuts
laterally across the stage,
draining miniature sail-
boats, children's toys.

An under-water leak.

New toy: an airplane
dives towards the
whirlpools.

A procession again; the water turns pink; starfish,
bouquets, banners, buoys, and a bottle.

The light has become intense.

The units of the set
are in their appropriate place.

(the octopus grabs hold of the bottle.)

Enter Atlanta,
nude, golden, a
light on her fore-
head, a state of
spiritual ecstasy.

The bottle from the sea is my notebook; like the
youthful poets, I have my little jottings. Text of
a pantomime. The mimes are dead and pantomime life.
Sunken belfries are superimposed on the esplanades,
ancient roadways, broken dams, islands with their
colorful dances, are swallowed up. Such is the
setting of the ball. Twin volcanoes, ardent
erections, frame it. In the boxes, real, oiled
gods, all arctic and antarctic record-holders,
panting and straining. You should know that the
human species has adapted a system of gills.
Has anyone recorded natural history? First
soloist: Noble Atlanta, vanished magnificent,
subject of our uneasiness, last edenist, professor
of civilization, heiress of angels, haranguer of
the planets, will you take a short course on pre-
history? Atlanta, intoxicated mystic, pearl-
swallower, animal charmer, winged men, terrifying
mathematician, go into your municipal museum, for
you are in fashion and your civil status vexes
the Institutes. They'll surround you up to the
deepest part of the water, without realizing that
you are soluble, like God the Father, who's a
fish and lives in his laboratory in the under-suns

Enter the explorer
of the XV century,
with the dagger
and cross.

He accosts Atlanta
and wants to convert
her, menacing her.
But he especially
tries to grab hold
of the light Atlan-
ta's wearing on her
forehead.

Atlanta pushes him
away.
Flees. Pursued
by the furious ex-
plorer.

The king enters,
seaweeded beard,
rusty crown.

A fierce monk
follows him bran-
dishing electric
lightning bolts.

The king siezes the
cup that the octopus
is holding out to
him. He leaves
joyously.

The monk takes hold
of the octopus and
threatens it.

The sea beggar inter-
venes. All in
leather. The monk
scampers off. The
beggar laughs,
catches a fish,
and eats it.

of the ocean. Fear the explorer who looks towards
the west, man without fear, without heart, sun of the
new Occident, who on his inflated vessel, broke the
imaginary chains of the Sea of Darkness. He reaches
toward the plumed Indies, to the mouths of Hell in
ashes. Man of action! Gold dust, syphilis, religion.
He's annexed hypothetical lands for the kingdom of
Christ, the Jew, where the Jesuits built churches
like theatres, full of trophies and black virgins.
He entered the sea, his foil high. Thus incompre-
hensible alphabets, tubercular savages, poisoned
fruits come about. Flee Atlanta! This Portuguese
Christian covets the lost light of your forehead.
Don't worry spectator! The dead mimes who pantomine
life are neither living nor dead. There're those
among them who reflected in the form of a shadow, in
order to have a shadow projected for an instant in
time. Nothing, not even the vision, exists. From
the atomic past I will give birth to the most
improbable figures: Here is a king theme for an
opera, Breton king, the last Celtic one, whose
memory arose in a lament so the burg, which
defied storms and moralists, crumbles under a helix
of ships. You know the rest! This medieval paeon
so affronted the Trinity saint that she sent for the
most Irish of her monks, who was sailing in a tomb
stone! The old king loved the sea nymphs, cold and
melodious in frayed dresses. The Tritons revived his
desire with trident blows. Equinoxes of anger; the
burg and its foundations sank into the waves at the
crash of cymbals. And the golden cup, o king, you
threw it into the killer wave. You look for it
still: here it is, this collector's item. And you,
monk in the granite boat, are going to say mass on
the back of a sleeping whale. The old king will sin
no longer at his age; and his burg, a loss for
archeology to salvage from the strong tides, is still
sliding in the shifting silt. Too late monk, and,
faith for faith, this armed supporter will slit your
throat while singing a chorale. Sooner the Turk
than the Pope! Good sailor, resisting in combat,
to the north he hears tocsins sounding an alarm.
He spits tar and saltpeter. The compass pointed out
the route to the new Jerusalem to him, and the rose
of the wind was blossoming for him, while destroying
the organs. At present his ship is in a bottle, on
a mantlepiece, and the large shell-fish have nibbled
away at his Bible! Good company is coming our way!

The bewigged pirate enters, a gentleman holding a banner with a fleur de lis. He salutes the beggar.

The siren, silver, whose purple tail overtakes the pirate. Thanks to the Lord. The beggar remains chaste.

The siren defends herself. The pirate moves away, vexed.

The beggar takes a chance. The siren makes fun of him. Exit together.

The actress enters, naked but covered with jewels.

The aviator and the young sailor enter, arm in arm.

The actress lights up a cigarette.

And poorly resists the two friends' advances.

The sea becomes phosphorescent.

The gramophone starts to play.

The three dance.

Styled pirate, precious stones, women, fires. As for the king! He was reading Catullus in between two adventures. The English died for it, but the English hanged him, and see the rope that he's wearing around his neck! Where are his hiding places? No one knows that, for his ship was found sailing full steam ahead and without the crew! Ask the sorcerers of Oceania. Would this withdrawn fortune purchase the favor of the siren? She lost her voice, but she remains a beautiful plastic design. The sister of the fairground cries, for the sirens have come to an end, copper engraving vignettes, sexual soprano, curiosity about the Atlantic aquarium, story book fish! Would you say, chaste and chalky mistress, how ephemeral, how puerile, are the underwater idylls? A sea-side twilight falls beneath the waves. The spider crab sighs. Amber prunellas are looking at you. Lithe pirate, athlete in lace, abandon the flawless siren, and take a bath in the Gulf-stream. A real love spot! One last rendezvous for romantic characters. The creature that's gliding toward us put on this costume, white skin and diamonds, for its aristocratic suicide. Fashionable, lots of bucks, and looks like Marguerite Duval; her success, this happens without a sound in the nocturnal porthole, and three obituary notices for the neurasthenic Parisian blonde. Such calamities in one season! Heroes from news items, comrades in misfortune, tragedians in spite of you, o law, tri-color friend, gas and caffeine, tendril, sperm whale, you get praised for three days, or scolded for three nights, and your name will remain in the book of rewards; oh you young sailor, fish-friend of the bird, explains to him that, all things considered, it's for France, for the skin, and that this leaves the world neither hot nor cold! You're looking for an editor for the ship's register This was the war, little sailors tattooed with riddles They sang the Marseillaise, took ether, and said prayers: My God, give these soldiers a little oxygen! The moral is good, the fatherland proclaiming it; dear little boats which go under water, sky writing, airplanes complain about the buzzing sounds. (But love is valued at nothing, young men! Paris-New-York . . . Je vous aime. Marguerite Duval nude in stereoscope. Angel pilot struck down. Scapular sailor. The enormous

The moon's tin antennae sweep the set like projectors. The volcanoes, from the bottom, artificial fire. Flowers are burning. A bell rings. The water becomes brown from the mercury reflections.

Rain of anchors.

ocean lights up, splendid shop windows . . . comrades, dramatic innocents! Enough stories. The night chokes the sea. The ultimate tide machines. The silt smokes. The serpent uncoils. The scenery folds up once again. The flowers have yellow animal eyes, the vegetation a female odor . . . And the nightmare universe has a hemorrhage. Alternating currents. The stars form the outline of a lyre. Nautilus yawns. Holy. It rains anchors, charms of hope

. . . .

The three dancers capsize; the gramophone shuts off. The octopus freezes, all its tentacles extended. The diver comes back up to the surface.

End.

EPILOGUE

As at the beginning, the sea, darkened. Lanterns. The dealer gesticulates on top of the pontoon. The diver's huge head emerges.

the dealer the treasure? How much? Quick! Aren't you wet? Speak!

the diver (after having lifted off his mask) . . . Nothing!

the dealer What? What did you see, touch, hear?

the diver Seen? The sea. Touched? Sea water. Heard? Sea silence.

the dealer Joker! You found something, but you don't want to say what it is; you're going to go back without me, a dealer on your own! From here I heard the gold shifting, I saw the gold sparkling.

the diver The gold only exists in your brain.

the dealer Liar! I'll have your vile, thieving diver's head guillotined!

the diver Since you're so headstrong, go see for yourself! (He imperturbably pushes the dealer into the sea.)

the dealer (coming to the surface for the first time) Help.

the diver And the gold?

the dealer (coming up a second time) I'm drowning!

the diver Are you going to tell me about the gold?

the dealer (coming up one last time) . . . act of penitence.

the diver What about the gold? (the dealer no longer reappears) Swim in peace! Peace be on all the drowned. The sky is clear, the sea is calm. I'm leaving by land where men walk around like apes! (he exits).

APPENDIX A

CAROLINE'S HOUSEHOLD

A Rough Sketch by Michel de Ghelderode

1930

Translated by David Willinger

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CHARACTERS

BORAX, itinerant stall-keeper

JOSEPH, carnival strongman

SUSKANEL,

PAMELA, and

SPIRIDON, mannequins

PIERROT,

COLUMBINE, and

HARLEQUIN, the immortals, but advanced in years

POLICEMAN (a policeman has no name)

SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE

In a suburban neighborhood, November, night. Sea-green sky, dim lights. Rainy weather. This accursed countryside is bathed in acetylene light, shining as if through juice. The stage is filled with a tent which inflates and deflates to the rhythm of the wind. A lantern reveals the inside, composed of reddish, embossed sheet metal. Above, printed in lurching letters:

CAROLINE'S HOUSEHOLD

At the rear of the booth, planks prop up plates, broken bottles. Saucepans are hanging from ropes. But the targets consist of three stiff mannequins, visible from the waist up. SUSKANEL, at the left, a sort of ghastly undertaker's mute with reddish-brown moustache, a top hat, and black top coat; PAMELA, in the middle, a dowdy, poodle-like beauty; SPIRIDON, at the right, a negro king in a bowler, bloated, with a hideous jaw, and covered in a red tablecloth like a regal mantle. These three caricatures have large visionary eyes that never blink, voices that resonate as though they were under water, uncoiled gestures -- when they come to life.

A bell is hanging in front of the tent and, against it, a little hand organ.

SCENE I

The curtain still closed, organ grinding is heard: a shredded waltz, an upside-down waltz for spirits drowned in an ocean of rain. The music dies out and one hears something akin to a chaliapinesque vocalization, a splendid, enormous, and interminable swear word.

VOICE OF BORAX -- Holy thousand billions in the name of Hell in the name of the name of the name of the name.

(The curtain rises.)

BORAX (itinerant stall-keeper, in grey sweater, wooden shoes, and seaman's cap, parades before his tent with the lumbering gait of a bear. He is angry, spits, and addresses the mannequins roughly.) -- Scoundrels, I say; ugly characters. Faces just begging to be socked. You don't even deserve the balls, five for a franc, holy thousand billions of goddamits, goddamits, goddamits. . . . (He hawks.) You'll burn me up, your wood, your straw, you'll set me on fire! Hm? You think you're so indestructible? If I had what it takes or was miserable enough, I'd smash you to bits, bang, bang, bang, and phony creatures that you are, all that would be left would be an old pouch, some rope, and a sound. Yes! (He hawks.) I'll have no trouble finding a gunman among my customers, who'll bring you down for the price of admission, nasty heads. (Addressing himself to an imaginary public, as if he had been overheard, to excuse his expletives:) You out there, eh, wouldn't you think that these braggarts are completely serene mannequins, quietly mildewing, and happy to gobble up flying objects, as you'd expect from good servants with huge sand-filled skulls? Yes, but how do you account for this? Look, there is one sentence painted on Missus Lympe, the fortune-teller's, salon, one sentence: Take care going by he who goes by: the universe is mysterious. (With conviction) Mys . . . te . . . rious! Understand? And isn't it confirmed somewhere else, by Professor Honore, the prestidigitator? There are liquids all around, like air currents, and when they go into action (Violent) Now's the time. You

see these three scarecrows, hm? The famous Suskanel, the eskisite Pamela, and the distinguished Spiridon, an antroporphi as they call 'em at the Stipzner Museum; do you see them, hm? Vurry good, this's a trio of rogues, in league against my business and my good name as an honorable worker. For example, a customer comes along, with muscles of steel, one of the hitter elite, who gets all the balls in the heart, on the nose: they don't move a hair. But let a child timidly toss it over their heads, all three fall in a convulchun Then they scream: fake! And that's the end. (Brutally, to the mannequins.) Yes, scum. And curse the day when I manufactured you. (Someone is heard coughing.) A customer? The midnight customers are the best. (He cranks the organ for a few measures, shakes the bell, and in showman's patter:) Step right up. Hey, stout souls. Here's Caroline's Household, which I inherited from her in person, which she bestowed on me for my favors. Hello, soldiers and sportsmen. We only accept money from champions. Five balls for a franc, a death with every throw, impunity, and a paper rose for the victim. Place of heroes! For those who need to take revenge on their mother-in-law or their concierge. (He lowers his voice) It was only you, Joseph?

SCENE II

(Joseph, professional strongman, in patchwork tights, enters. He's dressed in an overcoat with raised collar. He produces a heart-rending cough.)

JOSEPH - Ach, yes Don't know how to sleep. Trying to find an open drug store, for cough drops.

BORAX - Ycu'll get better, strongman, thirteen-time winner. Spit and you'll be cured. You have a star tattooed on your left arm; it's yours.

JOSEPH - But around it's written: Bullshit!

(New coughing fit.)

BORAX - Poor Joseph! You've been playing your trombone too much. You got verdegrised for it. Everyone's got problems Joseph. Do you want to earn a shnaps? Listen. Your weights are hollow, right? Which doesn't mean that you're not a colossus. But still, your weights are hollow. Buy my mannequins, on the other hand, aren't hollow. What're they filled with? Liquid in God's name!

JOSEPH - Alas, if I get talking about the cause of my miseries. Strongman, the victim of his work as a strongman. With liquid, you say? I know a thing or two about that, boss. My cardboard weights are hollow, you say? Yes, fifty, a hundred, a hundred fifty pounds of illusion. Actually, they don't even weigh two. But no sooner on stage, under the evil eye of the public than the magic begins . . . and it's impossible to cheat anymore. The liquid is transforming the cardboard into lead, and it's really fifty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty that I've got to lift, pull up, fling off . . . under threat of being booed, chased out of the fair. Ah! Then my bones crack, back breaks. More of a job than being a strongman and having to lift real weights. It's going to break me yet. A terrible spell, good God by good God, a terrible spell that's been cast on the itinerants. If you knew who . . .

BORAX - Who? I believed my mannequins were bewitched too. Now I'm convinced that they, themselves, are the witches. The spells would stop if you destroyed them. These evil ones. The devil's in them; kill them! Joseph!

JOSEPH - Why don't you kill them yourself?

BORAX - I don't have the heart. My rheumatism . . . my phlebitis!

JOSEPH (laughing) - Too much imagination.

(He takes a ball from the ledge of the booth and makes it jump in his right hand. Immediately a crack and the three mannequins fall down behind, in a clump. The two itinerants give a start, stupified.)

BORAX (howling) - Did you see? Did you see them?

JOSEPH (troubled) - Strange, really. Maybe the wind?

(The three mannequins have surreptitiously gotten up again.)

BORAX - Quick, strongman! They're up to their tricks tonight. Finish them off. The ball, take it, the hardest one.

(He puts a ball into Joseph's hand.)

JOSEPH - We'll give it a try. You do what you can. (He takes the ball, tosses it in the air, catches it, but lets it drop. The ball reaches the ground and makes a noise as if it were a weighty mass.) Aie! It's a steel ball!

(He coughs heavily.)

BORAX - Let's see, Joseph. It's wood!

(he picks up the ball and feels it.)

JOSEPH - Enough! You're making fun. And of a poor guy who's dying of consumption. The liquids are in my carcass. Goodbye, friend.

BORAX - Joseph, I swear to you

JOSEPH - Don't feel like laughing. I need my cough drops.

(He leaves looking like an old man.)

SCENE III

(Borax watches him leave. He is the victim of the doubt that's rising up within him and also of anger, the icy kind this time.)

BORAX (through his teeth) - Goddamit of goddamits of goddamits of a thousand billions of goddamits. That one's just too strong for his own good. (He shakes his fist at the mannequins.) This's your last night, do you hear? I don't know what's holding me back. No, I don't want to dirty my hands by touching your carcasses. (a few steps.) I'm going to the cabaret. To put a real bun on. And when I've had something to drink, I become terrible. Flames'll shoot out of my mouth. Then bloodshed. And fire to your backsides. I'll tell everyone who you are. I'll lead all the able-bodied drunks to see you dead. (He hooks a placard to the tent, which reads: "Second-hand mannequins wanted.") Cheers!

(He leaves with decision, not without having spit in the tent. One hears his steps die off, and silence underscores the groaning of the wind in the cloth.)

SCENE IV

Then, simultaneously, the three mannequins turn their heads in the direction of the stall keeper's exit: the two male mannequins salute politely, the female mannequin sends a kiss from her fingertips. Their heads go back and it seems that a triple sigh of relief is heard. Then, still straight-faced, the three look at each other, heads pivoting. They long to laugh. They contain themselves for a while, bubble over, and suddenly, the laughs burst out.

PAMELA (who's no longer laughing.) - Stop! (Suskanel gets a wallop. Spiridon, who's still laughing, is the next to get smacked.) He pronounced our death; we are free. It's the first time that he's left us

alone. Let's make good use of the time. Since our mischievousness isn't always enough to keep us from getting hit by the balls, and since we're threatened with destruction, in line, left face, (The three get in line, facing left.) and to another existence, forward march!

(They start to march, disappearing and coming back on stage in front of the booth. They're losing a little of their rigidity, though they're still mannequins as before.)

SUSKANEL - Well said, Pamela. Are we going away then?

SPIRIDON - Aren't you scared that our outfits'll call attention to themselves? It's just that our look is a bit special.

PAMELA - There're so many starving people wandering around the city at night. And yet, aren't we beyond laws? What have we got to lose? Our skin? A linen sack. Let's act, brothers. We've had enough years of enduring the massacre in silence, shots pitched by the hundred thousand sadists who make up the crowd; we've got to let our rage loose once and for all. Let's return the injury a hundredfold. For my part, I feel that I'm capable of the worst.

SUSKANEL - Yes, let's act, each according to his instincts. Vengeance!

SPIRIDON - Our turn to massacre! A franc for five bad deeds! And when we've sacrificed in the name of hatred, we'll sing of love, our love, won't we?

PAMELA - Just one minute, tall, dark, and handsome. First things first: putting a spell on our persecutor, our jailor, our master, hmm? He won't be back till the daybreak, drunk as only he knows how to get. What an easy prey.

SUSKANEL - And after?

PAMELA - We'll see when the time comes.

SPIRIDON - You could see right away; you never see so clearly as at night. Tell us all your thoughts, Pamela, my heart. We shall part tomorrow. the three of us or you alone or the men together or

SUSKANEL - Or you with one of the men?

PAMELA - Is this starting again? So; men they say an undertaker's mute and a gorilla! You make exceedingly original mannequins, but not quite men, my dears. (She loses her temper.) I don't want any trouble. We've kept up our harmony in slavery; let's hold onto it when we're free. (Treacherous) I repeat: We'll see when the time comes. (In a low voice) Of course, it's possible that I'll lean toward one of you, loving both all the while. But do we know which? I'm not saying, but if one of you were to distinguish himself with a sensational exploit tonight. For I'm so susceptible to sensations, to perverse imaginations, and I'll bestow all on the one who makes me tremble most profoundly. Come back to this spot at dawn. Each on his way.

(They all shake hands. The two men leave, one to the left, the other to the right. Alone, Pamela puts her beauty in order. She chuckles and emits a few small hysterical laughs. Suskanel returns precipitously, kneels on the ground, and stretches out his arms to Pamela.)

SUSKANEL - Adored one word only I love you. It's with me that

PAMELA - Leave, out! It's obvious that you've got a way about you. I repeat: To the author of the most shockingly heinous crime Let's hope it'll be you, Suskanel.

SUSKANEL - We'll see what we shall see!

(He gets up and leaves.)

PAMELA (alone, she makes up) - He's dull, though vicious.

(Spiridon precipitously enters, jumps on Pamela, and attempts to carry her off. She disengages herself.)

SPIRIDON - I burn. I want you, I eat you. It's me, or else. . . .

PAMELA - Down with the claws, dusky! Only to the author of the most shocking crime, that's the condition.

SPIRIDON - And what if we're equally deserving?

PAMELA - With your canibal roots, you stand the best chance of winning. Good luck.

SPIRIDON (exiting) - Thanks, my tender sweetheart.

PAMELA (alone, starting to laugh again) - Yes, this man of the woods would be preferable, since he comes pretty close to manhood, for he has brutality, stupidity, and coarse lust. On the other hand, Suskanel and his undertaker's dummy ways My heart is swaying to and fro. This will be love at last. Wriggle about, rags that are my entrails. To the job at hand. There are certain deeds that can only be committed at midnight.

(She leaves in a roundabout way. A nearby church slowly strikes midnight. Silence and the rattling of the wind.)

SCENE V

(After a moment, the strumming of mandolins is heard playing the melody from Chopin's funeral march. Soon one sees three calamitous characters arrive, soaked, dirty, and visibly discouraged. They're called Columbine, Pierrot, Harlequin, and are exactly what their names suggest, the classic figures. Only, Pierrot and Columbine are over sixty years old. Harlequin,

though, is about eighty. The colors of their costumes are faded from the elements and a multitude of patches can be made out on them. Pierrot is playing his mandolin. Columbine is leaning on Harlequin's arm. The latter walks with little steps and is carrying a double bag on his back.

The group stops in front of the stall. Pierrot turns his mandolin over, from which a cascade of water pours out. The three shake themselves off like dogs that've just climbed out of the canal.

PIERROT - And to think that there were poets who glorified the rain Ah, the uninformed! Come, I've found a shelter.

HARLEQUIN - Even if it's a massacre game, it's still a shelter when someone finds out where we are: Nowhere. Shall we never see the end of our miserable existence? Ah! To die.

COLUMBINE - Don't talk nonsense Harlequin: In your heart you know very well that the closer you get to death, the more objectionable it becomes. Thank Heaven who's offering us a shelter.

HARLEQUIN - You'll see how fast we'll be expelled from it. These itinerants are uncharitable beggars.

(He sits, leaning on the booth.)

COLUMBINE - It's still a respite. (She sits on the ledge.) I'm so weary. I'm so cold. That's the lot of one who falls in love with a lunatic with some moon worshipper, that bright star without fire, without heat, without luster.

PIERROT - Screw the moon.

(He sits on the ledge.)

COLUMBINE - If you still had your candle someone could rekindle her flame.

PIERROT - Screw the candle. We've greased our sore feet with the last piece of it.

HARLEQUIN - Screw the ardor which used to light up our mime masks. Unfortunate derelicts that we are, antiques.

COLUMBINE - For God's sake, let's not think of it.

PIERROT (singing sadly) - For God's sake. (spoken) Soggy shadows. End of the golden age. The age of our misery I mean, when our young eyes made us see life as all golden. We didn't have the guts to dissappear gracefully when our star was high. Who remembers us? Not even the old folks in the homes, homes which won't even accept us.

HARLEQUIN - Because we don't have civil status. Our names aren't even names, Pierrot, Columbine, Harlequin . . . or they're theatrical names! And our profession, singers for hire!

PIERROT - If only some author or other wanted to put us into a play.

COLUMBINE - I've tried everything, you know I have. Many's the time I worked for you two. Just now I presented myself to a theater as an extra. They only took the young ones who go nude. Fat chance, right? Once upon a time, long ago, I had a pretty body. Do you remember it, Pierrot?

PIERROT - Yes, Columbine.

HARLEQUIN - A very pretty body, Columbine.

(They've imperceptibly come together, and are huddling to get warm. They dream for a moment.)

PIERROT - My darlings, my dear darlings. We have nothing anymore. Not even our fights. Our memories shiver in the haze. And we pass our days alternating between hiding our hungers and resentments. This has got to stop!

COLUMBINE - It's awful to die or worse, not to live anymore.

HARLEQUIN - Do you call what we're doing living? To live is to eat, drink, have a bed, tobacco.

COLUMBINE - All that's missing, for sure. But the extra bit, that we've got: affection. I still maintain that I'm almost happy.

(She promptly bursts into tears.)

PIERROT - O Columbine, there's enough water falling from the sky. We're happy, though, nothing could be truer.

(He cries without restraint.)

HARLEQUIN (jumping down from the ledge) - Let's hide this good fortune in a handkerchief. (He wipes away a fugitive tear and walks timidly up and down, even though the others are choking.) Saved! (He stops in front of the placard. Pierrot and Columbine come down from the ledge to see.) They're asking for second-hand mannequins. Work at last!

COLUMBINE - Mannequins are fake. We've got what they need expression, style.

PIERROT - And the clothes. Used to being stiff as we are, we'll fit right in. Mister Director, we've come in answer to your ad.

HARLEQUIN - Yes but If they're asking for mannequins, is it because our predecessors have been put out of commission? What are these balls for?

COLUMBINE - These balls? They must be for entertainment. Could there be a connection between the balls

PIERROT - And the mannequins?

HARLEQUIN - I'm afraid. A painful job, probably. Getting hit by balls. But if we got something to live on, by suffering in this way? And then we remain ourselves, we remain artists.

COLUMBINE - We wouldn't remain so for very long, at our age, with our slender schooling.

PIERROT - In that case they couldn't reproach us for being cowards. Right, Harlequin?

COLUMBINE - Snowballs, maybe.

HARLEQUIN - Don't worry, dear. You will live, you will die in flowers. Paper flowers are flowers just the same.

COLUMBINE - But will they take us on?

PIERROT - My idea. . . . Let's just take the place of the mannequins who aren't there anymore. When the boothkeeper comes back, he'll find such resemblances that he won't argue. The right mannequins in the right place.

COLUMBINE - You think so?

HARLEQUIN - So it's done!

(They climb over the ledge and take their places in the booth, Columbine in the center, they freeze, and soon, as seen from the waist up, seem to be real mannequins.)

SCENE VI

(Rapid steps. Pamela enters, out of breath, seems distracted. She leans against the booth and looks in all directions.)

PAMELA - Aha ahaahaha The first to get back?
 aha and long before daybreak? All this happened that
 fast? Aha What a run through the dark city
 aha aha I'm satisfied at last
 satisfied!

(Fast steps. Suskanel enters, out of breath.)

SUSKANEL - Ah, my lovely! aha aha Already
 here? What about the other one? Aha What adventure! Listen
 I'm the one who's winning. My prowess aha
 Let's go together before the vile negro aha

PAMELA - Cool off please. What about our plan to punish the stall
 keeper?

(Fast steps. Spiridon enters, frothing.)

SPIRIDON - You together? (He grinds his teeth.) Aha aha
 aha Get this I've gone beyond I triumph.
 The city is seized with panic, warned by the alarm aha
 And now Pamela is going to choose her love.

PAMELA - Foo! (She looks at the two of them.) You're not so handsome
 tonight. So, tell me what deeds you did.

SUSKANEL - I've (he lowers his voice) What infamy. I'll tell you in
 your ear, Pamela, so that one there doesn't try to outdo me. (He speaks
 into Pamela's ear. She jumps.)

PAMELA - You did that?

SPIRIDON (brutally dragging Pamela toward him.) Oh! But me. Much more
 impressive! (He speaks into Pamela's ear.) When that one there finds
 out!

PAMELA (as frightened) Misery! How terrible! (She looks at one, then the other.) I don't know which of you inspires me with more disgust. In truth you are vile. You're equal in awfulness. (She spits.)

SUSKANEL - What's going on? Could Madame have turned moral since midnight?

SPIRIDON - And our Pamela, what has she been able to do to return so satisfied with herself with this superior air?

PAMELA - A totally abominable thing, but exquisite. I'm shaking again. (Nervous laugh.) You're mannequins, that doesn't mean

SUSKANEL (raising his fist) - Take care! Slut!

SPIRIDON (siezing Pamela by the neck) - You've betrayed us? (Pamela emits a raucous scream which is answered by an anguished scream from behind the booth.)

COLUMBINE - Help!

(At this cry the three mannequins stop and slowly turn around looking at each other with an inquiring look, up to the point when they discover the trio occupying the booth. Pierrot, Harlequin, and Columbine don't move, horrified, with wide open mouths from which no further sound is heard.)

PAMELA - Ho, ho? Mannequins?

SUSKANEL (tapping the placard) - Other mannequins? Have we been replaced?

SPIRIDON - And what mannequins! What if we put their endurance to the test? He picks up some balls) I choose the Pierrot.

PAMELA (picking up some balls) - Columbine for me. Everything considered, this is merely returning the rudeness.

SUSKANEL - I'm taking the Harlequin. (he picks up some balls.) The new stuff won't last very long. It'll be turned to mincemeat. Five balls for a franc, yes? At the command. (He raises his arm and aims.)
a-one two

PIERROT, HARLEQUIN, COLUMBINE - Mercy!

(Before the fatal reckoning has occurred, they drop capsized, leaving emptiness in their place. The three mannequins lower their arms and laugh joyously.)

SUSKANEL, SPIRIDON, PAMELA - Oh,oh! Oh! The poor little things the innocents! They're made of cotton, paper! Mercy, they cried; crying for mercy in a massacre game! Oh! Oh! There they are, kaput. Oh! Oh! Oh!

PAMELA - Silence!

(They quiet down. They listen.)

VOICE OF BORAX - Holy thousand billions of names of names of goddamits (Hiccups not infrequently, grunts) of goddamits, goddamits, goddamits. . . .

PAMELA - Comrades, let's leave these extras. The one from whom we must win revenge is coming. Hoopla!

(By common consent, they jump over the ledge and install themselves in the booth in the places they occupied at the beginning of the act. They look like insensible and harmless mannequins, and nothing more. A moment goes by, taken up by the sound of steps, as Borax enters, drunk, all dirty since he has rolled in the gutter, and carrying a rifle. He has a truly

sinister manner; the alcohol gives him a really terrible look. He wanders around and it takes a while for him to get reacquainted with his booth. At last:)

SCENE VII

BORAX - I've come. I'm here! Death and blood! There they are, stiff with terror, the blackguards. The pledge is made, I kill you. I've drunk, I'm valiant. Not scared of you anymore, I'm not scared of your tricks, your liquids anymore. Here's a good shooting rifle . . . and ammunition. Shoot you I will. Scoundrels. Commend your villainous souls to the devil. Fast. Aim . . . (He raises the gun to his shoulder, staggering, looking into the distance. Immediately, the three mannequins set to swaying drastically, from left to right, in unison, from right to left, from left to right, faster and faster. Borax takes up the motion too, swaying, but in the opposite direction. He loses his footing and just misses falling.) Damned name of the name of the name . . . (He throws his rifle away.) Are they drunk? Are they joking around? (He takes two pistols out of his pockets and takes aim at them.) Lead for you! Be damned! (The three mannequins raise and lower themselves, raise, lower. Borax loses control and shoots at random. Bottles and plates can be heard breaking as well as the percussion of the bullets on the zinc in the back.) And him . . . and her . . . and him. And one! (Suskanel falls down, laughing heartily.) . . . two! (Pamela falls down, laughing heartily.) . . . and three! (Spiridon falls down, laughing heartily.) Screw them, there they are! Victory! I'm delivered. (He throws the pistols away.) I'm going to tear them apart. I'm going to set fire to the booth. He walks toward it. A terrifying triple cry and Pierrot, Columbine, and Harlequin appear, hands joined. Borax recoils.) Hunh, what? Ghosts? I'll shoot them too. I'll kill everyone. (Not finding the pistols anymore, he picks up the balls and winds up.) Courage! (Suskanel, Pamela, and Spiridon gleefully stand up behind Pierrot, Columbine, and Harlequin.) Six? A conspiracy! Not afraid, I repeat. You could be a hundred! (He throws

one ball, which lands in the void, since the six characters have gone down at the same click and disappeared. Borax triumphs.) Put an end to them that time. Six with one ball! (He rubs his hands together.) I'm going to tie them up together. And a magnificent auto-da-fe'll light up the fair so that people'll ask what it's all about. I'll put out to sea, now that I can relax. (He climbs over the ledge and goes inside the booth.) What happened to all the corpses? (He bends down. While he looks, Suskanel, Pamela, and Spiridon appear from the left looking menacing; trying to make themselves scarce and holding hands, Pierrot, Columbine, and Harlequin. Borax starts to swear:) Thousand billions of the name of the name of

(He notices the six and makes frightened gestures.)

SPIRIDON - Our turn! Five for a franc!

BORAX - Help!

(He howls and hides his head in his arms. The three mannequins have gotten hold of balls and throw them violently at Borax, egging each other on with savage yells. During this massacre, Pierrot, Columbine, and Harlequin freezing, applaud timidly with their fingertips and produce sickly smiles. Soon Borax opens his arms and collapses in the booth with a pathetic bellowing sound.)

SCENE VIII

SUSKANEL - Our night is over! Freedom is ours!

SPIRIDON - Love is ours!

HARLEQUIN (timidly) - Long live love and liberty! That was my slogan. You're really quite expert at the massacre game.

PAMELA - Let's let these three live, all right? Aren't they ridiculous in their carnival outfits! Dear comrades, I'm getting rid of these disgraceful cast-offs. Allow me?

(In a twinkling she has removed her hat, her wig, her blouse, and her rags. Underneath she's dressed like a fashionable young lady. All the same, these tasteful clothes only cover over her mannequin body. Suskanel and Spiridon admire her.)

SUSKANEL - Ooh! Lovely! But I too have foreseen that appearances would have to change. (He takes off his top hat, dress jacket, and pants: there he is dressed like the first comic lead, and as such, seems to be a stiff display mannequin in a tailor's shop window.) This is a man of the world having the honor of asking for your hand, Pamela. Then, let this grotesque negro

SPIRIDON - Allow me? (He throws off his cast-offs and appears clothed in a superb sporting outfit. He adjusts a new cap on his skull.) We've dreamed of this, comrade! (He puffs up his chest.) Am I pleasing to you Pamela? Dawn is breaking Let's hurry up with the drawing of this romantic lottery.

SUSKANEL - We're two languishing suitors who only want to go to bed.

PAMELA - It's just that both of you, your deeds have me dazzled, that your respective virtues Let's keep it simple. (She takes out two pistols and holds them out to the suitor.) Fight. I shall give myself to the survivor.

SUSKANEL - Never! The brilliant feat I performed should be enough. (He throws the pistol away.)

SPIRIDON- Never! And spoil my new outfit!

(He throws his pistol away.)

PAMELA - You're annoying me. What then?

HARLEQUIN (politely coming forward) - Madam, Gentlemen. You had the generosity to save us just now; allow me to offer my knowledge in giving you a bit of advice dictated to me by long experience. Look, the three of us are living together, and we live happily; that is, we could be happy if it weren't for always being short of cash. Aside from that

PAMELA - This is advice?

HARLEQUIN - Stay as three; honor the amorous trinity, as the perfect color harmony. Black and white framing the blonde. Love embraces shadings and oppositions. It will even add variations. And then, three is a cabalistic number. Therefore, try as you will to reduce it, it will invisibly reconstruct itself. You seem to me to be a very loving and faithful person. You will be twice as faithful and the moral of the story's a lovely girl who comes out all right in the end. Amen.

PAMELA - What do black and white think of this?

SUSKANEL - I accept.

SPIRIDON - And I jointly.

PAMELA - Come, then, my husbands!

(She takes Suskanel and Spiridon by the arms and leads them off. Suskanel and Spiridon salute Harlequin, Pierrot and Columbine.)

HARLEQUIN - Good luck, madame et messieurs. (The trio gone, Harlequin smiles. Pierrot and Columbine, who were lingering on the side, come close to him.) It's the hour for lo-oo-ove. . . . and hot coffee. We won't have hot coffee. So it goes. And to think that we'd almost found a job. What's the use of staying in this fair any longer, since the one who would've been able to take us on was totally destroyed without a trace.

(During these last words, Borax has gotten up in the booth and hanging on to the ledge, looks at the emptiness, haggard. Columbine notices him.)

SCENE IX

COLUMBINE - Heavens!

PIERROT (seeing Borax) - Let's go!

HARLEQUIN (seeing Borax) Misery!

(Paralyzed by fear, they gesticulate, their legs buckle. They fall to their knees and hide their faces.)

BORAX (who has cleared the ledge, advances towards them. He is still reeling from the shock of the massacre.) They really only three, those six? And here are the cast-offs of those others. You're the other three in borrowed costumes back to torment me again. But dawn is breaking and your night time liquids don't have much effect anymore. I have him at my mercy. Not with firearms. And not with violence. In sweetness, niceness. Have you looked at my hands? They're going to throttle your necks, my velvet paws are. With what delight. I'm no good, I'm not! If I opened a massacre game, it's by vocation. If I set up a carousel, it was for the pleasure of mistreating the wooden horses. Others' suffering fills me up with well-being. Ha! With infinite joy I'm going to strangle you, my mannequins. You, first off, ex-Pamela, turned into Columbine.

(He approaches Columbine.)

COLUMBINE (gets up and utters a faint shriek) - Police!

SHRILL VOICE (close by) - On the way.

(General anxiety. Pierrot and Harlequin get up uncertainly. Dawn breaks wanly.)

BORAX - What police? I haven't done anything! No need for police here! (He's worried.) Except for these weapons. (He splutters.) Do you ever know if you're entirely innocent? (Brutal) Quiet, you three! Into the booth; look sharp, just like mannequins. And don't move. (The three hurry to obey and go place themselves in the booth, very fast. During this flurry, Borax has hidden the weapons under the organ and has done himself up in Pamela's wig, Suskanel's top hat, and the embroidered table cloth that Spiridon used to wear.) Don't want the police in on my business. Attention, you three! I'm becoming a mannequin, in my turn, the fourth and the best. (He gets to the side of the three and freezes like them.) Bring on the cops, they won't see any better. And they'll be totally fooled. Silence, goddammits by goddamits.

SCENE X

(Then, doing a solemn parade march, enter the policeman, in all his sinister splendor: Busby, high boots, moustache, enameled prunella, glittering saber. The Policeman, at last. He stops, observes the booth, and emits a tiny castrati voice, in contrast to the huge body from which it springs.)

POLICEMAN (saluting) - Here I am! (He inspects.) Where is the individual who called for the Police? Nothing? So it's the voice of my natural intuition which summoned me. I find myself on a stage, on "the" stage. (a few steps.) In extraordinary places you take the chance of making extraordinary discoveries. First, why this booth is open and lit up at six o'clock in the morning when the fair usually closes down at midnight? Hum! Then, why does this fourth mannequin exhibit a different aspect compared to the other three? (To the public) You can have a trained eye and only be a cop! (Pursuing his monologue:) Finally why did my left ear whistle, proving that my guardian angel (he salutes) summoned me on the approach of an important event? Let's investigate. (He caresses the bodies of Pierrot, Columbine, and Harlequin with the point of his saber,

who don't flinch.) These characters from a masked ball are indubitably artificial and, due to this attribute, escape Justice. (His saber probes Borax-mannequin who doesn't flinch.) This one seems to be more filled. Could it be made of meat? I'm going to test his reflexes. A solid gash in the nape of the neck and we'll know if it is to be or not to be!

(He twirls his saber, his left fist akimbo.)

BORAX (cowed, wanting to protect himself.) - Pity?

POLICEMAN - It's you!

BORAX - Who?

POLICEMAN - You!

BORAX - Me?

POLICEMAN - Yes!

BORAX - No!

POLICEMAN - By declaring that it's not him, he shows that he knows who I'm talking about, since it's him! Honor to me! I've arrested the hideous monster! (He yells at the top of his voice:) I've got the man of the three costumes! I've seized the ubiquitous criminal! (to the public:) Ubiquity means: faculty of being found at the same moment in many places at great remove, one from the other. (With a wink of the eye.) To unearth such a find, what glow-ry! (To Borax.) I arrest you in the name of human and divine laws.

BORAX - Explain.

POLICEMAN (leaning nonchalantly against the ledge, menacing Borax with the point of his saber.) I'll explain since nothing can be denied to one condemned to death.

BORAX - Hunh? Condemned? And to what?

POLICEMAN - To death. Yes, my dear, your abuses reveal such unspeakable filth that we have received the order to wipe you out on the spot. But as we want to offer the very edifying spectacle of a capital execution for public consumption, I'm guarding and taking care of you until I'm able to deliver you live to the executioner. In the main square they're already constructing the vat which'll be filled with boiling wax, and in which you'll be dipped at the stroke of noon, before the crowd, the officials of the law, the clergy, and the civil guard.

BORAX - I. . . .

POLICEMAN - You you you. Don't pretend. Who in various cabarets has wanted to allege, and so looking to prepare an alibi, that three so-called mannequins with so-called liquids were so-called capable of worse abuses? Information which hadn't fallen on deaf ears. Hush. Who has, between midnight and twelve fifteen, penetrated the house of a working family disguised as an undertaker, and taken advantage of the parents being asleep by butchering a newborn in its cradle. These suspicious stains on your hat answer for you! Hush! Who has, between midnight and twelve thirty seven, in the disguise of a negro or an ape or both, broken down the door to the cathedral and then to the sacred tabernacle, for the purpose of stealing the sacred hosts from it? Hush! Who has, between twelve thirty seven and exactly one o'clock, dressed up in the cast-offs of a dowdy old woman, broken a windowpane of the kitchens of the imperial palace and took the service stairs up to the rooms, perpetrated on the noble person of his highest serenity, our little prince-heir (He salutes) a foul act before which my policeman's conscience reels with a terror equalled only by my indignation? Hush! Who, I ask you, who, who. . . .

BORAX (stammering) - I

POLICEMAN - He confesses! He said, "I!" (To the public) I, personal pronoun, first person singular. I, me, myself; I, therefore, him! (To Borax) And for the rest, am I not catching you, for all intents and purposes, red-handed? Aren't you taking care of your morning toilet dressed in the undertaker's dummy's top hat, with this stringy mop of hair, in this crumpled cape that was seen on the body of a negro? And these cast-offs lying on the ground, to whom do they belong? Hush! Putting all the outfits together we come up with the ones you wore tonight! Your mannequins' rags, quite simply, these poor irresponsible mannequins that you'd pass off as criminals! These mannequins there that you haven't had time to dress up again in their original clothes. Have I explained enough? Come scoundrel, unique in the annals of the law. Society will rejoice at your death, for it is common knowledge that you were cruel by nature and that you kept a massacre game only to satisfy your propensity for torture. Come along!

(He grabs hold of Borax and wants to pull him out of the booth. They start to fight. The booth shakes.)

BORAX - Me! I'm innocent! Dear mannequins, defend me! Joseph hey strongman come to my aid. Call the bearded lady the snake man the giant, Nikanor

POLICEMAN - Be cooperative or I will leave my sweet ways behind only to take up some firmer ones.

BORAX (beside himself and at the end of resistance.) Assassin!

POLICEMAN - Assassin? That's too much. He's dared to say, "Assassin," to an honest policeman in the exercise of his authority! (He loses his temper, siezes Borax around the waist, and drags him away howling. Borax

grabs hold of the tent which cracks all over and collapses, enveloping the three mannequins who haven't budged.) And for this new offense Bam crime against the police force Bam you'll take for starts Bam, bam, bam, a bit of this Bam, bam, bam, bam rough handling.

(They're gone. Borax's screams are still heard, though dying out, and from afar, hooting and cheering. Silence on the scene of the disaster.)

SCENE XI

(The heap of debris shifts, from under which Pierrot, Columbine, and Harlequin emerge. They disentangle themselves, as well as they can, touch themselves for sore spots, and cast desolate looks.)

HARLEQUIN - We've had a lucky escape!

COLUMBINE - I'm dead from fright. Let's go far from here, far away.

PIERROT - My mandolin is broken.

COLUMBINE - I don't want to be a mannequin anymore.

HARLEQUIN - Never again will we take the risk of asking for honest work.

PIERROT - We did it in good faith, didn't we? Just didn't have any luck, that's all. Well, since the booth-keeper will die shortly, what if I borrowed his barrel organ? Always a compensation for the blows absorbed, the fear endured. (He picks up the organ.) We'll play it artistically, and that will earn us some money.

HARLEQUIN - Come. Our lot will hardly change. We are without country, without hearth. Got to go on to be nothing.

COLUMBINE - Unless an unfashionable author even a Belgian, wants to put us into a play.

PIERROT - The sun is coming up. On your way, pathetic troupe!

(He plays his little organ. Filled with weariness, they leave, dragging their feet. It is daylight.)

1930

APPENDIX A

THE LIAR'S CLUB

A Play in One Act by Michel de Ghelderode

1931

Translated by David Willinger

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CHARACTERS

Luna - An Helene Fourment in her autumn.

St. George - Very young, and very lazy. He seems to be a snob, but isn't.

Sir Edward - Skinny little man, brick-colored complexion, affected gestures, English type. Monacle. Clothes too large for him and big hat.

Thomass - Squat, loud, and emotional seaman.

John - Handsome boy, pleased with himself, playing at being the dandy.

Ben Samuel - Obese, red hair. An ugly face.

DECOR

A small bar on a pier, in the old style: mirrors, palm tree, velvets, gilded entranceways. The windowpane with drawn curtains and the door in the back. Along the left side, a tiny bar with bottles on display, tiers of glasses, and artificial flowers. A brown siren in a glass case, showing off a white grin. The gas burns even though it's well into the afternoon. From outside, sounds from the port, rolling wagons and shouts from the ships, plus the sound of bells every so often.

SCENE I

(Luna is dusting the counter.)

LUNA - Dust on my beautiful bottles, dust. . . . Are you sleeping, my crystals? (She flicks the crystal, which tinkles.) You're dusty, siren. Are you singing a tune. No, she only sings for men! (Speaking to the siren.) I don't have your luck. They won't keep me in a glass coffin when I die. Were you blonde as well? All the sirens from the River Scheldt were blondes. (Shaking her duster.) Dust. . .

(Saint George has come in silently and has overheard Luna's words.)

ST. GEORGE - Dust we are, you and I! Luna, I've just gotten up from sleeping. (He yawns.) And my eyes are full of dust. Sand in my mouth, ashes I should say. Ah! This port in winter! Give me a drink quickly, to light up my heart.

LUNA - Say good evening to the siren at once.

ST. GEORGE - Good evening, young mummy, dried up little corpse! (Ironically.) You never sang!

LUNA - No more than you ever did, poet! Tell me good evening.

ST. GEORGE - Good evening Luna, sage virgin! Shall I love you today?

LUNA - That's a stupid question!

ST. GEORGE - Take care Luna, it's going to shoot forth like a terrible flame! And you'll laugh to see me burnt. (Lowering his voice.) I dreamed tonight.

LUNA - Of what, then?

ST. GEORGE - Pardon. Of you.

LUNA - A dirty dream?

ST. GEORGE - No, baroque. I was strolling in front of the hospital and I saw you washing shrouds in a basement window.

LUNA - Quick, my Dream Book! Go on.

ST. GEORGE - That was all. I awoke entangled in a shroud, which was only a bed sheet, but this shroud had your smell. Is it possible to understand how I'm obsessed by you without wishing to be? (He drops into an armchair.) I'm going to continue my sleep and the next episode. And if the gentlemen come, tell them I'm making up a poem.

(He pretends to fall asleep.)

LUNA (to herself, but aware that he's listening.) - St. George! You'll love me when I want you to. You're the fourth to desire me. The danger of love, that could be enough for a woman. (She gets close to the young man and sniffs the air.) Liar! You've spent your night with a whore!

ST. GEORGE (as if talking in his dream) - No dear. I'm not sleeping. And you, you sleep exactly like my dog. I'll drown you when you're an old woman.

LUNA - The faker! His games are like a sneaky child's (In a loud voice.) St. George, I've received a letter signed Samuel. Do you know a Samuel?

ST. GEORGE (opening his eyes) - They exist by the hundreds in the ghetto, the Samuels do. (Refusing the letter Luna holds out to him.) No.

LUNA - This note is tormenting me. I read the cards this morning, and I saw a letter there, a visit, worries, but also a young, chivalrous man.

ST. GEORGE - It's striking three o'clock. Was I sleeping?

SCENE II

(Sir Edward enters.)

SIR EDWARD - Good evening. And a jolly good evening to you, St. George. The one who killed the dragon, does he come from your family?

ST. GEORGE - No sir, I come from a long line of good-for-nothings. (The two men shake hands.)

EDWARD - And you, Luna, good. . . . (He curis his fingers under.)
Oh! My hand's cold!

LUNA - Hot everywhere else though. (Concerned.) You've been in the diplomatic corps, haven't you?

EDWARD - I still am, business advisor. I was an aviator previously.

ST. GEORGE - I'm going to tell you your life, Sir Edward.

EDWARD - Thanks! Whatever you invent will be from reality.

LUNA - So, you're a diplomat for the moment? I was waiting for you. Why did you come so late?

EDWARD - Work, my ravishing one. I'm verifying corsair papers.

LUNA - Then be a dear. Read this letter.

ST. GEORGE - Don't accept, Sir Edward. It's a letter that she's sending to herself, that she wrote with her left hand.

EDWARD (reading over the letter) - I can't make head or tails out of this jargon at all.

LUNA - but if it came, who sent it to me?

EDWARD - I'll take care of things diplomatically. (He returns the letter.) St. George? I was in Paris. Just a while ago and I was astonished not to see any of your books in the shop windows.

ST. GEORGE - In shop windows? I wouldn't stoop so low. You'll find my poems in the aquarium at the zoo where they defend themselves against frightening fish with moustaches.

LUNA - His poems?

ST. GEORGE - Luna, you are my most beautiful poem, pink and blonde, with an old-fashioned charm.

LUNA - Shut up or I'll claw you.

ST. GEORGE (to Sir Edward) - It's her way of showing affection.

EDWARD - Why don't you write a novel, slightly spicy, with this title:
Luna?

ST. GEORGE - I'm a chaste being, Sir Edward. I'd be lying with each line.

EDWARD - Everyone lies. Diplomats. . . .

LUNA - The labels on my bottles. . . .

ST. GEORGE - Everyone? That's the way it's done.

SCENE III

(Footsteps are heard. The door shakes.)

LUNA - My God, I'll never have peace.

(Thomass, officer in the merchant marine, enters.)

THOMASS - By Nautilus! The perfect resting place for the man who rocks on the high seas! Greetings! How do you do, Sir Edward? What do you want from my cargo as tribute, coconuts, frozen beef, an automobile? Ah, my dear St. George! When will you sing of the sea, the nightmare ships, and the Ursa Major? No! You're a museum poet! Of ivory and wax! At last we're back together here. It was one year ago tonight, dear Luna, that we faithfully came to this chamber of velvet and gold. One year, and I haven't possessed you again since! Are you going to faint on my tattooed chest soon, Pamela?

EDWARD - I beg your pardon. I got here before you.

ST. GEORGE - Enough, gentlemen.

LUNA - What are we drinking?

THOMASS - Firewater, no less. Poet, honor me with a two-line verse.

ST. GEORGE - You wear your tattooed heart that you don't have,
 And the anchor on your arm is never sunken.
 The sweet name Luna, faded, painted virgin,
 Is the name of a vessel which hasn't set sail.

THOMASS - Stop! I didn't ask for more than two of them. Hey! I'm
 a poet too. One day I'll write the book of the sea, salted, iodized,
 sucking and pressing.

ST. GEORGE - Have you seen any sirens?

THOMASS (turning toward Luna) - None! Here's the last, and the only
 one with the gift of enchantment! Love the only man possible, the
 merry seaman. Before being interred in a glass coffin with bowls of
 naphthalene all around, you'll have had lovers, dear Luna. (He kisses
 Luna.) Hey! I'm hungry for some pink meat. My blood's full of the
 sun.

ST. GEORGE - By mercurj.

THOMASS - Ah! The noble disease? We don't mind that.

LUNA - Shut up! We don't know what you're talking about. Here,
 captain, read this letter.

THOMASS (reading, then) - Who's the ass who sent you this epistle,
 dear friend? Are you upset? Just let this Israeli pig come! Last
 night, during debarkation, I knocked down two bumpkins.

EDWARD - I read in "The Neptune" that your ship was expected to dock
 this morning?

THOMASS - To prove the papers wrong, I set sail from the dock Siberia
 yesterday. (He sits near the other two.) Will we be having a full
 house? Our club's a marvelous invention, gentlemen! Outside, the
 smelly city: brown sugar, damp fowl, tar. Here, you inhale a carnal
 incense; here in this closed chapel, the blonde madonna with blue lips
 shines. Will she stay deaf to our pleas?

ST. GEORGE - Don't you know, Thomass? The moon sleeps, but Luna
 doesn't; or she sleeps by herself. At times she dreams of a sleep-
 ing companion who, like her, wouldn't sleep. Which won't be me.

EDWARD - It's just a stupid job. One day, in Spanish Morocco, I
 traded two hundred thousand guns!

THOMASS - That's nothing compared to the cargo of liquor I took safely to port!

LUNA - There are no stupid jobs, but some are disgusting! I know a person who earns his living. . . .

(She hesitates.)

ST. GEORGE - By making the sirens sing. . . .

LUNA - Shut up. Someone's stopping at the door.

EDWARD - Someone was missing. (The door opens. John enters.) It was him.

SCENE IV

JOHN - It's me! Good evening! Is everyone here? (Shaking hands.) If it hadn't been for a lucky crossing, I'd have missed this meeting. A year of friendship, gentlemen, what a miracle! (Kissing Luna.) The miracle is you. . . .

LUNA - How nicely you kiss!

ST. GEORGE - You learn how to do it in seven easy lessons. Are you coming from far away, big John?

JOHN - From California, but how small the world is! I came back to drink a beer with you.

EDWARD - And the profession, big John? Much success?

JOHN - No. They made me turn out crap. In film, genius means nothing; you've got to have a fair wind. They're scared stiff of intelligence back there. And you need to be good at wheedling from the dollar-shitting animal! Never fear, they miss me, and a letter has already summoned me back.

LUNA - I've got a letter too. . . .

THOMASS - Console yourself, John. Your hour will come! You're a god among gorillas. I saw you in a lousy film one time, but you were splendid.

JOHN - What was it?

THOMASS - The devil only knows! There was a virginal young girl, a suntanned blackmailer, and an athlete whose spirit was as beautiful as his appearance.

JOHN - Indeed.

EDWARD - I've got to see that.

JOHN - And you, St. George!

ST. GEORGE - I never go to the movies, but I see you very well, dear John; I imagine that . . . you were the man of the hour.

LUNA - What became of the young girl?

ST. GEORGE - She lost her virginity amid the happy tears of a conjugal climax.

LUNA - And the blackmailer?

JOHN - I had settled his hash previously. Bang!

LUNA - Read this letter, John. You're that athlete.

JOHN (reading over the letter) - Is it a screenplay?

EDWARD - It's a diplomatic affair of which I'm in charge.

THOMASS - Hey! This is only round one!

ST. GEORGE - Star, navigator, diplomat, so were we singing in celebration of our meeting? Evening's falling. It's the time when the fever mounts.

THOMASS - An orgy, hunh!

EDWARD - In honor of the siren!

JOHN - There'll be four of us to adore her.

ST. GEORGE - You'll be three.

LUNA - And the fourth, little one?

ST. GEORGE - He looks on and pays for the champagne. Serve us.

(Luna goes to the bar and carries glasses and bottles from it.)

THOMASS - Gentlemen, I'm going to tell you about my latest adventure, for don't we all meet to give an account of what extraordinary thing happened to each of us? My steamer was making its way honestly, loaded with contraband.

EDWARD - That's common! What if I reveal to you my tribulations with a spy of the most dangerous sort that I discovered? A character who sold huge folios of phony treaties.

JOHN - We've heard about that affair already! This was tragic for me. A petite brunette who was crazy about me committed suicide in the hall of my hotel. Fluff and scandal. Don't ask me her name, I've forgotten it. (A silence.) This incident, ordinary in and of itself, had no consequences in puritanical Hollywood; but my manager made me aware of the fact that it was the third time the same thing happened to me, and asked me to take a trip to Europe to allow enough time for the corpse to cool off.

ST. GEORGE - I maintain that none of you has gone through anything truly novel, in reality. Contraband, espionage, and suicide? Life, gentlemen, does life offer so little to the imagination?

JOHN - What do you want poet? For us to invent our adventures, to lie?

THOMASS - Goddamn! If you'd spoke in your turn, we'd believe you. Tell us what happened to you.

ST. GEORGE - Nothing happened to me.

EDWARD - Why?

ST. GEORGE - Because I didn't do anything.

JOHN - Is it possible to do nothing in this violent age? Let's see, you did something? Did poems?

ST. GEORGE - If you wish. . . . I do something. . . . I sleep. . . . Standing, seated, eyes open, I sleep. And I dream. Let it be known, I'm not adventurous, and I was born tired of a reputable, rich father. I can even accurately describe my last nightmare to you, a tumble across the solar system, or my last perplexing dream, the title of which is: Luna, laundress of shrouds.

JOHN - Go on. Let Luna tell us of. . . .

LUNA - What? My worries?

ST. GEORGE - We know them. Tell us about your most beautiful night of love.

LUNA - I'm not in top form.

ST. GEORGE - Let me speak. I'll tell about that most beautiful night.

EDWARD - Do you expect us to believe that you're her lover?

LUNA - I don't have a lover.

EDWARD - Why?

LUNA (drinks and laughs, then:) - Because none of you ever bothered.

JOHN - To possess her.

THOMASS - If you could take a hint. . . .

LUNA - And don't wait for me to choose! Only one.

ST. GEORGE - Should we draw straws?

THOMASS - So we can find out who'll eat her up? No, let's roll dice on the goddess' body.

ST. GEORGE - Her spirit being in the glass case inaccessible. Beware, the dice are loaded!

JOHN - The dice? Quick!

EDWARD - Only one winner? Misery!

LUNA (laying out the dice) - At a roll. The one with the highest score's the winner. Play, Sir Edward.

EDWARD - Sixty five! Alas! Poor Edward.

THOMASS - Watch this. Thirteen! (He spits.) Isn't that lousy?

JOHN - Me? Lucky where women are concerned. Two hundred and sixty! Luna, my compliments!

LUNA - Ah, but St. George must play.

ST. GEORGE - I don't like the risk involved. Do I have to play?

JOHN - You have to. . . .

ST. GEORGE (throws the dice, without looking) - How much?

(A silence. Consternation from the other three. Luna fills the glasses.)

EDWARD - Congratulations.

JOHN - How do you make throws like that, kid?

ST. GEORGE - Without thinking, like my poems.

THOMASS - The cheater! Ha! Is a woman worth a throw of the dice?

LUNA - So, St. George, you want me?

ST. GEORGE - What'll you give me for my trouble?

LUNA - Whatever you want.

ST. GEORGE - Go to your room. I'll join you there. (silence.) No. Stay. I feel sorry for my friends, for their dejected faces. I want to offer them a reflection of my good luck. Strip, let them see what they've lost out on.

LUNA - Just like that?

ST. GEORGE - Yes, since you're so beautiful.

(Luna goes to open the bolt on the door, comes back, and after a sigh, starts to undress. The men, except for St. George who has closed his eyes, have assumed nonchalant demeanors and cast hypocritical sidelong glances at the woman. Luna takes her time. After a while she's in her chemise, and her body is already outlined beneath the transparent linen. She hesitates and fakes an obligatory modesty.)

LUNA - I don't dare.

ST. GEORGE - What's stopping you?

LUNA - Sir Edward's monocle.

EDWARD - Pardon me.

(Luna makes up her mind. At this moment, the door is shaken by kicking. Luna puts her dress back on and shoves her lingerie on a table. The men are disappointed.)

THOMASS - Who's this lout?

LUNA - The man in the letter!

JOHN - Let him come in!

(Luna goes to open up. Ben Samuel appears in overalls and worn out shoes, but topped off with a greasy bowler.)

BEN SAMUEL - Closed meeting?

LUNA - I'm at home.

SAMUEL - I am too, more or less. (He leans on the counter.) A little beer. (Then he notices the lingerie on the table, smells it, and dismisses it.)

LUNA (getting the glass down, with humor) - Three francs.

SAMUEL - One franc for friends. (He tosses a coin. Turns toward the men who haven't stopped looking at him.) Go ahead. . . . I've come on business. (A silence. The men are still staring at him.) What's so special about me, that you're looking at me, hm?

ST. GEORGE - The scum.

SAMUEL - As you please. I enjoy having people around. (He turns his back on them. To Luna:) And my letter, did you get it? Before anything else, I must get it back.

LUNA - I don't have it anymore.

SAMUEL - It's been passed around? These gentlemen know about it? (He goes over to the group.) My letter!

ST. GEORGE - I'm keeping this collector's item.

SAMUEL - You?

ST. GEORGE - Conduct your business, my good man. You haven't caught my interest up to now.

(Ben Samuel turns back to the counter. The others drink and smoke, feigning inattention. St. George sleeps.)

SAMUEL - The money?

LUNA - I don't owe you anything.

SAMUEL - Don't owe me anything, not even some gratitude? (Raising his voice.) And I ripped up my straw mattress to get her furniture! The ingrate! (He slams the chest.) Without her Uncle Sammy, she'd still be receiving negroes in her bug-infested cave! Without me there wouldn't be any gold or mahogany!

LUNA - I don't know you!

SAMUEL - And to top it off, she doesn't know me! But me, I know her, in detail. Look here, the lovers, the evidence. . . . (He takes out a packet of photographs.) Admire this girl wearing less than nothing, showing off her body. . . .

LUNA - Son of a bitch!

(She's about to grab the photos. Ben Samuel puts them away. St. George quickly intervenes and snatches them.)

ST. GEORGE - I adore this.

SAMUEL (laughing) - Sneaky!

ST. GEORGE - Five francs apiece.

(He pockets the photos.)

SAMUEL (threatening) - Give it back.

(He's about to grab St. George, who slips through his hands. John gets up and comes between them.)

JOHN - Enough! You're about to see how we treat hooligans like him in America.

SAMUEL - Have you been to America?

THOMASS (getting up in his turn) - Don't converse with this kike, big John. What do you want, you disgusting character? To make acquaintance with my seafaring fists? Yours won't be the first mouth I've sculpted. Ha!

SAMUEL - You're a sailor? And you box too?

EDWARD (intervening) - Allow me, my friends. I'll take care of everything. Am I not a diplomat?

SAMUEL - Diplomat? What a clientele, Luna!

LUNA - Gentlemen, control yourselves. I'll pay and he'll go away.

ST. GEORGE - Luna, I forbid you to pay. . . .

SAMUEL - And that one, what's he? A baron?

ST. GEORGE - One centime.

SAMUEL - Agreed!

(He steps back and leans on the bar, and stretches his right hand behind his back.)

LUNA (frightened) - Sammy?

JOHN (facing the Jew) - You!

SAMUEL (calm) - You! Don't play act. Not with me, hunh? You play a musketeer who comes to women's rescue very well, but between you and me, there are rules to go by. Am I the one who spends time with certain ladies who give you your living and allow you to exchange your bar doorman's livery for the impeccable young lead's jacket?

JOHN (laughing) - You're mixing things up, my dear. (He quickly puts his hat on.) Very badly kept, this bar.

(He leaves.)

THOMASS (addressing Ben Samuel) - What have you got to say about my friend? Explain this.

SAMUEL - Where did you borrow this outfit from? Could I be seeing things wrong? Aren't you the second hand dealer at Saint Jacques Square? Have you made any voyages aside from the ones from your store to the salesrooms? It's very nice!

THOMASS - Very nice! Hah! The goat! He stinks! Phew! Air. . . .
(He leaves, forcing a big laugh.)

EDWARD - Mister Samuel, stop making a mockery. I vouch for these gentlemen being what they seem to be.

SAMUEL - Just like you, right? What were you a moment ago? A diplomat? I'll come up to you to scratch your calf when I see you on your step-ladder in the process of scrubbing window panes at the stockbroker on Twelve-Month Street and ask you if by any chance, you aren't somebody else, hmm?

EDWARD - Upon my honor. . . . (Whispered.) You won't get away with this insult.

(He leaves very fast, after having saluted everyone.)

SAMUEL - Your clientele has taken off; end of the festivities. Come on, my big girl, a little smile?

LUNA - Beat me, break everything; I'll give you nothing!

SAMUEL (going to the bar) - In that case, we'll pay ourselves.

ST. GEORGE - Get those paws off the box!

SAMUEL - Is he part of this group?

ST. GEORGE - I belong to the house.

SAMUEL - You take them young Luna? And this nice little young man who's going to. . . . Oh! With what? With his fists like the others?

ST. GEORGE (with this he points his gun) -I'll count to three. The exit's in front of you. (He aims.) One. . . .

SAMUEL (who loses his cool) - Hunh? We're not kidding any more! (He makes for the door.) That's dangerous, you know! (To Luna.) I must tell him that there used to be a guy in the kitchen! (Leaving.) Bye bye! Just like nothing had happened, hmm?

(He disappears.)

LAST SCENE

(Luna goes to shut the door, then notices Saint-George, who is poised and aiming at the bottles on the bar, as if he were at the fair, one hand akimbo and one eye closed.)

LUNA - Don't shoot!

ST. GEORGE - No? I was going to kill the siren.

LUNA - Stop. I'm lost. It's frightening, what that man said. You're going to think that I'm an old prostitute.

ST. GEORGE - The nasty word!

LUNA - And you'll despise me. Do you despise me? (Silence.) Give me that gun. (Saint-George gives the weapon to her.) I want to die.

ST. GEORGE - Poor friend! That gun is lying too; it's not loaded!

(He takes the weapon back.)

LUNA - So?

ST. GEORGE - So?

LUNA (coming close) - You stood up for me. Do you like me?

ST. GEORGE - If you like me.

LUNA - Okay. The others won't come back anymore.

ST. GEORGE - They'll come back.

LUNA - And you, are you going away?

ST. GEORGE - I'll come back to listen to them, to believe them.

(He puts some bills down on the bar. Luna tries to embrace him.)

LUNA - Why are you paying? (Silence.) Stay. We're alone.

ST. GEORGE (moves away) - Too late. Some night if it's raining. I'll love you in my dreams. Yes, I'll look at the photographs in which you're so shamelessly beautiful before going to sleep.

(He's at the door.)

LUNA (annoyed) - Poet! Oh, you . . . why are you a poet?

ST. GEORGE (contemplating the harbor) These are things women will never be able to understand.

(He shuts the door gently. Luna shrugs her shoulders and, sulkily, gathers up the bank notes.)

Curtain

APPENDIX A

DUVELOR

Or The Farce of the Old Devil by Michel de Ghelderode

1931

Translated by David Willinger

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Characters¹

Duvelor

Melanie²

A Capuchin

Lepisser

Melanie's Intended

The Judge

Father Confessor

Monks

Little Devils

¹A cast list was omitted from the French edition. (Trans.)

²Through what appears to be an error, this character is called Amelie at first and later is called Melanie. I have not amended the error. (Trans.)

In the house of Duvelor, the devil.

(Duvelor enters, pursued by his wife, who is hitting him.)

DUVELOR - Ay, ay, ay. Pity, pity wife, pity on me. I'm sick. Ay. Don't yell. Don't hit.

AMELIE - Bif Baf Bif Baf! Bad, bad devil.

DUVELOR - A devil, Madam, does a devil know how to be good?

AMELIE - Rogue Bif Beast Baf
Liar Bif! Traitor Baf Cheat
Bif! Trickster Baf!

DUVELOR - Stop, Madam, stop. I don't have as many titles as all those.

AMELIE - Boof! My stick is broken. Die in shame, you who have done me harm! You're nothing at all. And I believed you to be a clever, clever devil, Sir.

DUVELOR - You knew very well Madam! You knew very well that you were marrying a devil.

AMELIE - Why didn't I marry an honest Christian?

DUVELOR - Better than that, why not a Jew or a Negro? Madam, Madam, why have you married the devil, the devil? That wasn't very virtuous of you!

AMELIE (crying) - Ah You were a handsome, young, gallant devil. Look at you now, old, dotting, phlegmy, and stinking.

DUVELOR - If only I was seventy-five again, like you.

AMELIE - You've said enough, old innocent. Have sweet dreams on your chair of doody.¹ As for me, I'm going to remarry a nice, nice, handsome boy. I'm deserting you and getting married again.

DUVELOR - Adieu, Melanie! Many's the time you'll think of my cloven hoof.

AMELIE - Don't you believe it. Happy old age, antique gentleman!

¹Textually: "On your kakedore."

DUVELOR - It will be happy, since you won't be here anymore. Good trip and a fair wind from behind! (Melanie exits. Duvelor, alone, sighs, and holds forth.) Alas! Alas! Here I am, alone in the world. Sad, left an old man. For I am old. And I'm bored, I'm bored. How many more days among mortals before being able to go back to Hell where I'll be rejuvenated so I can come back to the earth. Alas! What a job, what a job! There are no more souls to destroy; the mortals are destroying their souls all by themselves. Melanie, my dear wife, come back my dear wife. Your arguments are entertaining even yet. Come back; I'll count three: One - two - three - (furious) Ah! You're not coming back? Be damned, damned and bewitched. I'll find you in the tunnels of Hell. (He sits on his behind.) Alas, poor Duvelor. Things being the way they are, try to rejoin your master, Lucifer, Lucifer, your all-powerful master. (He hangs himself.) Requiem, requiem, wooden coffin and deep hole. Or put me in an old sack to the singing of dogs and the clanging of pots. Requiem! (He swings from the ceiling. There's a knock at the door.) Come back this afternoon!

(Lepisser appears.)

LEPISSER - Mister Duvelor, I've come to get the money you owe me.

DUVELOR (hung) - See, Sir, what a difficult situation I find myself in.

LEPISSER - That's true. Help, he's hung! He's hanging! (He exits.)

DUVELOR - Is he going to prevent me from dying?

LEPISSER (returning with the Capuchin) - Come my Father. Come minister to this poor man.

CAPUCHIN - Mea culpa, mea culpa. Confess and reflect on death.

DUVELOR (still hanging) - It's my fault; I've incurred debts with the grocer, Lepisser. I've struck my wife; I've lied; I've stolen; I've destroyed peoples' souls; I've said the name of God, the sacred name of God.

CAPUCHIN - You are damned, damned.

DUVELOR - That's for sure!

CAPUCHIN - And go to the devil, to the devil.

DUVELOR - I'll give him your compliments.

(The Capuchin exits.)

LEPISSER (very angry) - Disgusting man, give me my money right away, my money.

DUVELOR - Don't worry, you're mentioned in my will.

LEPISSER - No, no, give it to me right away, or I'll kill you!

DUVELOR - That would give me great pleasure, since I'm having such a hard time dying.

LEPISSER - So good, die then! (He pulls Duvelor by the feet.) Lousy client.

DUVELOR - Pull harder, harder please! (The rope breaks; fall, frightful fracas, Lepisser hides, Duvelor gets up.) Oh! The grocer? Are you dead? What bad luck! I was the one who was hanging and he's the one who's dead! So much the worse for me. Grocer, there's a cupboard in my cellar where old spiders live. You'll sleep your last sleep there. (He throws Lepisser in the cellar and, all at once, the Capuchin comes back.)

CAPUCHIN - Look, I forgot my Cross of Our Lord in this house.¹

DUVELOR (aside) - From the devil's house, the devil's house, you'll never leave again, Capuchin!

CAPUCHIN (to Duvelor) - What? You're not dead?

DUVELOR - No, Reverend Father. A miracle took place! An angel came and cut the rope.

CAPUCHIN - That's a true miracle, a true miracle. And the grocer?

DUVELOR - That's another miracle. The devil struck down this dishonest merchant and drove him into Hell.

CAPUCHIN - It's a double miracle, a double miracle! I'm going to spread this around all over. (He rushes out, yelling:) Duvelor hanged himself and an angel cut the (Duvelor pursues him. After a moment he comes back with the Capuchin.)

DUVELOR - Don't say that I hanged myself or the judges'll hang me for good.

CAPUCHIN - I won't say it anymore. But why did you hang yourself, hanged from the ceiling?

DUVELOR (tearful) - Because I'm a lonely old man, alone in the world, abandoned by Melanie. What else could I have done, then, then?

CAPUCHIN - Practice virtue.

¹ Literary translation of the expression: "Kruis Lieven Heer," meaning rosary or scapular.

DUVELOR - Virtue? I hadn't thought of that. Is it very hard?

CAPUCHIN - It takes practice.

DUVELOR - You're a saintly monk. I want to repay you for your advice. Do you like wine, priest's wine?

CAPUCHIN - Oh, oh! Priest's wine? Burgundy!

DUVELOR - Come into my cellar, good monk; you'll be drunk by the time you leave.

CAPUCHIN - I'll empty the cellar out, but I won't be drunk. Let's go!

(They go down into the cellar. Howls.)

VOICE OF CAPUCHIN - Help! He's killing me. He's the devil!

VOICE OF DUVELOR - I'll teach you to refuse me the sacraments, when I'm hanging myself!

(Duvelor comes up after a moment, changed into the Capuchin's robe.)

DUVELOR - Here I am, a virtuous man, since clothes make the man. Who'd recognize me? I'm going to hear peoples' confessions, and that'll be a riot, ho, ho!

(He wants to leave, but at that moment, Melanie enters, all dressed up; she's dancing.)

MELANIE - Mister Duvelor, where are you, where are you? I'm here to tell you that I'm remarrying!!!

DUVELOR - Madam, you're going to change over to tears as before. Alas, alas. Duvelor won't die from jealousy, for he is dead from grief. He just died and already smells bad.

MELANIE - Bravo! Well done!

DUVELOR (aside) - The whore! (to Melanie) - Then remarry. I wish you much good fortune. Where's your intended?

MELANIE - He's waiting for me at the door. Do you want to marry me to him, Father?

DUVELOR - Yes! Get the intended so that I can marry you to him. (Melanie leaves and Duvelor tries out his marionette Latin:) Crabus, crabum, liberirum en broubelus spikorum alde zotus in herbergum.

(Melanie and her intended enter, he a huge pink boy.)

MELANIE (bowing) - My Father, here's the intended.

INTENDED (bowing) - My Father, I am the intended.

DUVELOR (blessing them) - Deo gratis! How handsome you are together! Come lovely Melanie, into this corner to confess. You can tell me everything.

MELANIE (on her knees) - I've wished a thousand times for the death of my husband, the detestable Duvelor; I've tried to poison him; I did evil each time; I lied; I've deceived Duvelor.

DUVELOR - How many times?

MELANIE - One time each time?

DUVELOR - That's nothing at all. For your penitence, you will kiss seven handsome men in seven days. Come here Mister Intended, come here and confess.

INTENDED (kneeling) - I've been a policeman; I killed my father and my mother; I put poor people in prison and I felt up married women all over the city; I've also done a bit of cheating; a bit of stealing. Finally, I'm marrying Melanie because she's been the devil's wife, and the devil must have been rich.

DUVELOR - You're right, the devil was rich. All your sins are pardoned. You're going to be happy. Come here Melanie. Put your hand in that of your intended. Plick - Pleck - Plack, you're married. Hear now the great secret, the great secret. I confessed the scoundrel Duvelor on his deathbed. He revealed to me that a great treasure is lying hidden in his cellar. It's for you, this great treasure, for you. You will be rich. So, the devil's money will be in the hands of worthy people. Come, come into the cave to look for the treasure.

MELANIE AND HER HUSBAND - Let's go look for the treasure.

(They go down into the cellar.)

DUVELOR (aside) - They'll take their nocturnal voyage through the black sulphurous country! (He goes down also, and terrible screams are heard: "Help! It's the devil! He's assassinating me." Duvelor comes up again laughing.) There they are, married!

(The Judge enters.)

JUDGE - Ah! Ah! Is this the home of Duvelor? I am the Judge. Is it you, Father Capuchin, are you the one that called out all over that Duvelor had hanged himself?

DUVELOR - Mister Judge, how happy I am to see you! Terrible things have happened. Duvelor, the imposter, made believe he was hanging himself. When I came back to his home, he had killed four people.

JUDGE - What a horrible crime!

DUVELOR - Right now, he's in the cellar, where he's eaten the cadavers of his four victims, of his four victims. He went mad with rage. Furious! Then he dropped dead from indigestion.

JUDGE - I want the documents of conviction.

DUVELOR - Come Mister Judge, come.

(They go down into the cellar. New slaughter.)

VOICE OF THE JUDGE - Me! He's slaughtering me! He's the criminal!

VOICE OF DUVELOR - You're going to be judged by Satan, in your own turn, red man!

(He comes back up.)

DUVELOR - Virtue is a very exhausting exercise! When will I be able to leave this sad world? Lucifer! Lucifer!

LUCIFER (coming up out of the floor) - What do you want? How have you dressed yourself up?

DUVELOR - As a hermit, like all devils who grow old. Isn't it time, great Lucifer, isn't it time for me to die, to die?

LUCIFER - It will be time in five minutes. Because you're too zealous, and you're sending so many good religious people to Hell that our administration doesn't know where to blow their horns anymore.

DUVELOR - Then, I'm going to get ready for it. See you soon, great Lucifer.

LUCIFER - See you soon, Duvelor. There'll be a small intimate reception for your descent! Vrooo!

(He goes back through the floor.)

DUVELOR (alone) - It's coming, the moment of death. (To the door.) Ho Ho, charitable person, passing by, go look for a confessor for me, a confessor! Rise, my soul.

THE CONFESSOR (running in) - Misery, misery, poor Father Kletsof! We've been looking all over for you. What are you doing here?

DUVELOR - I'm going to take my last breath, my Father. Confess, confess.

(He lies down.)

CONFESSOR (kneeling) - So be it! What evil have you done?

DUVELOR - None. I've only done good, just good! You know that.

CONFESSOR - Father Kletsof, you are a Saint.

DUVELOR - That's my opinion.

CONFESSOR - Pass away in comfort. You will go to Heaven for sure. I'm going to go look for the sacristan and the monks in order to give you a good burial.

(He runs out.)

DUVELOR - The moment is approaching. Satanas pakmevas! But I'll leave them with a good memory. (Singing is heard.) Those monks, small and large; the large ones have black feet; the small ones have white feet.

VOICES OF THE MONKS - Pater Kletsof in Pierlanda, tra-la, tra-la, tra-la.

DUVELOR - I'm dying! (He stiffens.)

(The monks, undertakers and sacristans enter.)

THE MONKS - Here is Father Saint Kletsof, who is about to expire. Let's carry him to the chapel. He is going to perform miracles.

DUVELOR - You'll see!

(They lift him onto a litter and circle around the set.)

MONKS - Tra-la, tra-la, tra-la-la!

DUVELOR (raising himself up) - I'm reviving, but only to tell you that I'm in Hell.

MONKS - Damnation! Help! (Rout.)

DUVELOR - Diabolus, diabolus! (Little devils appear all over, chase the monks, and dance around Duvelor.) And now I'm returning to underground infernos to look for a new form and new spirit. I'll be a young, handsome devil. To the pleasure of seeing you again! Let's go down in procession, little devils!

(Lightning, thunder, infernal din.)¹

DUVELOR AND THE DEVILS - To the boiler!

CURTAIN

¹
Viekke-muziek: Literally tin-pan music.

APPENDIX A

RAINBOW

A Fairy Tale by Michel de Ghelderode

1932

Translated by David Willinger

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CAST

The Angel Partibuze - fat, rosy-cheeked, with a high, thin voice

Father John - little monk, beard and cowl, all in brown, but feet in black

Petronella - pretty shepherdess, With color like a shepherdess from a pastoral toy, but one that's not made of wood

Sun - The magnificent, resplendent in light rays, completely in gold, apart from some spots from the irreversible ravages of the centuries; but magnificent nonetheless, all golden and shining

Rain - woman in gray, misty, slender, and sad and long, like a rainy day

The Colors - feminine when grouped together, masculine when singled out: Purple - Indigo - Blue - Green - Yellow - Orange - Red; these androgynes can be told apart by their hair tinted: purple, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red.

SETTING

An esplanade at one of the altitudes of the sky: the very one at which the classic azure officially ceases to exist. These parts are remote, so remote that the movie screen they call infinity is here. In the foreground, propping up his buttocks in a gothic-malinois easy chair, the angel Partibuze sleeps the sleep of the just, like a sucking pig. At his side is a large projector. Partibuze's title is angel electrician, but he doesn't know all that much about it. Leaning against his easy chair are an umbrella and parasol; objects necessary for his duties. Slightly set back, a barometric hut with two doors, inhabited, in defiance of Morality, by Father John and Petronella, the shepherdess who isn't made of wood.

STRONG VOICE FALLING OUT OF THE ZENITH

Nothing new in the universes.

ANGEL PARTIBUZE (hardly awake)

Hallelujah! (sleeping again) What's the weather going to be, little monk?

VOICE OF FATHER JOHN

Changeable neither beautiful nor ugly.

ANGEL PARTIBUZE (waking up again)

Why doesn't he come out of his hut to announce the weather, like he's supposed to? Let me see you, little monk.

FATHER JOHN (charging out of his hut by the left door)

Here I am, sire.

ANGEL PARTIBUZE

You're flushed? What have you been doing?

FATHER JOHN

I may be flushed, but it's an ecstatic state.

ANGEL PARTIBUZE

You were meditating upon the shepherdess?

FATHER JOHN

If you please, the ceiling split open and I saw seraphim like demented butterflies; I got a speck of multi-colored dust which dropped down into my eye from their collisions.

ANGEL PARTIBUZE

That's a white lie and I suspect your good dwelling of many uncatholic things, committed or to be committed. That's God's problem not mine. Be that as it may, I suggest that you be punctual in coming out, leave by the left with your cowl up when Rain is announced, have Petronella leave with her luminous hat when Sun is announced, and both of you stay quietly inside when neither rain nor shine is expected. So says the Divine Decree on the heavenly changes. (he gets up with difficulty and pats himself lightly on his belly) That means, I'm responsible only as long as the great and marvelous appearance of the Rainbow lasts.

FATHER JOHN

Not too exhausting for you, since the rainbow doesn't appear so often.

ANGEL PARTIBUZE

Rare and desirable for that reason. Though tricky to manage, I insist. It may look like a work of art, but its foundations were laid by mathematicians. Listen, I'll have to busy myself with eclipses and comets some day soon. Please the All Powerful to give me as a successor some ascetic good-for-nothing with vinegar pens who doesn't take temperature duty lightly.

FATHER JOHN

Comets and eclipses, that's the reward I wish for you, and caramel nectar forevermore.

ANGEL

To each his own. It's more sinful than sucking on your shepherdess' sweet ear lobes.

FATHER

To each his sin. (he groans) Honey! I've stayed outside too long.

Rain inevitably comes along. Give her my best wishes. (he goes into the hut.)

ANGEL (opening his umbrella)

This isn't going along the way it's supposed to anymore. Humans aren't unjustified in protesting the breakdown of the Seasons. (Rain enters.)

Hello, Rain. Wet, are you?

RAIN (with melancholy)

I'm raining.

ANGEL

I beg your pardon? To rain is an impersonal verb. Speak of yourself in the third person.

RAIN

Then she's raining. Poor humid creature. Praises rise up to me in the midst of the universal curse, frog choruses alternating with the quack-quacks of duck ponds, and crowning it all, the shabby peacocks desperately calling for Leon who never answers.

ANGEL

Rain with all your soul, Rain . . . the good earth loves your torrential tears, oh you, mother of springs and mineral waters, oh you who turn little brooks into great rivers.

RAIN

Your grandiloquence is well water. You're getting pretty fat, aren't you?

ANGEL

It's first class grease, angel grease, invulnerable to you, Rain, and unmeltable by the Sun.

RAIN (recoiling)

Wretch. Why bring up the Sun?

ANGEL (fake innocent)

You still love him? A little? A lot?

RAIN

Passionately, madly. Almost to the point of declaring not at all. Flow my tears. The conceited, the superb, matinee idol of the sky. He avoids me. He comes before. He comes after. Never during. Or else by mistake. And then

ANGEL

Then I shine. It's a great light show. It is Rainbow. And the children utter cries of joy in the countrysides, the birds go out of their minds, and the silver fish come up to the surface to see. As for me, you know, I never asked to unwind what the poets jokingly call the sash of Iris.

RAIN

How far apart these meteorological marriages are!

ANGEL

All the better and brighter for it. Feeling lukewarm, are you, Rain?
(he extends his hand to her.)

RAIN

I am hot rain. A paradox. It's the Sun who's cold, yes it is. He's lost his flame. Long ago, around the time the world was created (those were the good old days, and we loved each other better in a new house). We stayed together through great stretches of the calendar. This boiling water love lasted up to the flood. Boo hoo hoo.

ANGEL

Console yourself. Sun's getting old and feigns disdain to mask his decrepitude. Nothing lasts, not even the Suns. He's getting old. And the old romantic, he fakes his fire. While you, in spite of your antiquity, you stay fluid, hearty, constant, etcetera.

RAIN

Etcetera. The rich consolation! (little sign of friendship. She leaves.)

ANGEL

(closing his umbrella and settling himself into the gothic-malinois easy chair.) How Madame, the rain tragedienne, what a lot of water. A little neurasthenic, like everyone who was around at the creation of the world. (he yawns) But aren't they talking in the angles of cloud living rooms, in light vapor words, don't they say that you're on the very best terms with Mr. Médard, noted saint, and others that he's more saintly than anyone else in a cautious paradise. (he falls back to sleep. The silence becomes his drone of snoring. And from the right of the hut comes Petronella, the shepherdess.)

PETRONELLA (recites)

Mamma, mamma, how come mothers don't hear their daughters when they call? Mamma, it's pressing in on me, Mamma, it's bothering me. I am wise me, innocent me, tender me, and darling but it's not possible to be any longer. And him, blazing in his beard, he wants me to confess and invent weird sins; he calls this playing confession, and grabs my waist, my chin, and those two round things in my blouse that you should only show to the devil. Mamma, he tells me about the anguish of being celibate and quotes Ecclesiasties to me, as though I understood his Latin. Mamma, he talks to me about curly sheep, about pleasures only the angels may have, and makes holes in the partition that separates

our two rooms. And Mamma, guide to my conscience, what do you want, you who must be watching over my behavior. That wretched monk. If I'm forced to play confession, I'll sin for sure. The imagination has its limits, mamma, and as for being pardoned, it's a rule of the game. I yawn and pine. I play without enjoying myself. Mamma, deaf and mute, I forgot to mention that I was an orphan.

ANGEL (waking up)

Petronella of cinammon, Petronella of vanilla. Cuckoo. Your cheeks are two artist's palettes.

PETRONELLA

Yes, don Partibuze. Always sunny, isn't it? (she fidgets.) Mustard! That's it. I wouldn't have had to come out, but I needed some air. Things are getting warm.

ANGEL

Enough. Watch out. Get back in the shadow, little girl, unless you want to turn into a charred virgin. (Petronella goes into the hut. Partibuze opens up his parasol with the papal colors: yellow and blue. Sun appears with great pomp.) Hello, Majesty, you who shine even on spit. Flamboyant as ever?

SUN

I'm perspiring. Blood to the head. With what ease I shall draw near the Pole or veer away from the Globe to these cool climes where snow is made.

ANGEL

Precisely. I've just seen Rain. She was worried about never meeting with you again.

SUN

I know, I know. Very old and pleasant relationship. Between us, it was a marvelous affair. Let her come to me; I won't avoid her. As for me going to her, my position prevents me. Lastly, if by any chance our paths should cross, perfect. All that freshness will be mine.

ANGEL

All that heat will be hers. And I'm turning on the ignition and spreading the Rainbow as a symbol of love.

SUN (familiar)

No fuss, no flapping. (He laughs)

ANGEL (aside)

Could he be getting senile? (he burbles with complaisance.)

SUN

If you're going to operate the magic lantern, let it be in broad daylight, I mean to avoid the twilights. There is my legal situation to consider, my ties to this old beast of a moon, who takes a chunk out of me, patches it up, simpers, and throws the four ends of my system back in my lap. It's nothing but a drama with me having to play the midnight sun in certain optical regions. Ooo la la, how many aeroliths I see!

ANGEL

Noblesse oblige! I'll take care not to involve your Majesty with the hope that she'll give me the opportunity to show off my skill as a colorist soon.

SUN

Understood. (aside) You send off this puff of gas as if it were a hardware owner's storefront. (he leaves. Partibuze shuts his parasol.)

ANGEL

He's straightforward and has a good presence. He's aged beautifully and space turns blue when he appears. (he yawns.) He's also an exhausting character. I've fallen asleep each time he's come. (he settles himself back into the gothic-malinois easy chair, fans out his toes, and promptly falls asleep. After a moment seven different sounds are heard; like the strings of a lute. The projector shutter clicks open and draws out the seven colors, slender and charming beings each and every one, all with shiny skin and covered with veils. They circle around the sleeping angel.)

THE SEVEN COLORS

(lifting their feet like chorus girls and, like them, singing off tempo.)

We are the children of the Spectrum, the imprisoned colors. Which doesn't keep us from dancing in a circle.

ANGEL (waking up)

Halt. Count off.

(the colors line up in a row.)

RED

Do

PURPLE

Re

BLUE

Mi

ORANGE

Fah

YELLOW

Sol

GREEN

La

INDIGO (whimpering)

What about mine, is mine flat or natural? I've got such a bad ear.
Pluck me?

ANGEL

Too - toot. Spin like a carousel until you turn white. No, play mix
and match. No, tell your color dreams.

YELLOW (bowing and reciting)

Mister Van Gogh appeared to me saying: you are the prettiest one.
Let the critic go take a piss. (returns to the line.)

BLUE (same gesture)

Without me there'd be no post cards, without me what color would
blondes' eyes be? (same move)

PURPLE (same gesture)

I'm from the Church, which explains why my personality's more sacred
than profane. (same move.)

RED (same gesture)

I taunt the bull, but I also adorn the middle class Frenchman's button
hole. (same move.)

GREEN (same gesture)

Me, I hope that I'll have the privilege of being green, no matter how old I get. (same move.)

INDIGO (same gesture, but sloppy)

I've lost my harmonics. I'm a difficult color. I'm insoluble in water like the fishes. (same move.)

ORANGE (same gesture)

I'm squeezed from a fruit that had to have juice. I'm a color talking about taste and smell. (same move.)

ANGEL

You're the color of translucent caramel my delicious one. You're the one I'm going to taste.

ORANGE

Gladly, but leave some over, and don't bite me.

ANGEL (licking Orange)

Superfine. I'm swallowing you whole. Caramel has no skeleton so it's no crime at all. There'll be six colors left over anyway, that'll be enough.

THE OTHER SIX COLORS (intervening)

No, no, we'll be sucked in one after the other, and the angel will have devoured the rainbow. Ooo!

ANGEL

That's true, but the truth's not delicious like you. But lead me not into temptation, candy colors. Go back into the lantern. Good evening.

Give me a kiss. (the obedient colors do so.) Turn my cheeks into a stained glass window.

(the seven colors slip into the lantern. The angel sighs.)

Dear colors, I'll suck you all up and paint watercolors with my tongue. (he sits) This time I'm really going to sleep. So much the less for Eternity. (he drops off to sleep, then mumbles:) Caramel caramel. (licks his chops and sinks down. A pause.)

PETRONELLA'S VOICE

Oho, cut it out Father John it hurts.

VOICE OF FATHER JOHN

The bad has good within it. Ah god! You'll ask me for it again!

PETRONELLA

(comes out of the hut from the right. A straying shepherdess)
He's coming after me with a raised and very threatening arm.
(without raising her voice) Help.

FATHER

(appearing from the left, festive beard, lecherous)
No scandal, dear. You'll receive absolution. Come in.

PETRONELLA

No, the tool of sin is too monumental.

FATHER

I know how to use it.

PETRONELLA (stunned)

I'll sin in my shame.

FATHER

Hurry. Or I'll explode in my frock. (he goes in precipitously.)

PETRONELLA

The billy goat, as if he thought he was the first one! (she goes in. Unsettled silence. At once Sun enters from the right, and Rain from the left, thus making a subtle tableau. Stop:)

RAIN

Who is it I see there? Don't leap so, my heart.

SUN

It's she, in lace and bubbles. Let's hide our happiness away. And how are you, dear Rain?

RAIN

Let's forget about grammar. As you see, I'm raining with pleasure. And you, Sun, are you shining?

SUN

Too much. A mite from tension. Don't put me out.

RAIN

Don't dry me up. And how is everything going?

SUN

I'm in the dark. The shepherdess just left. Then I rolled along.

RAIN

Curious. The little monk left too. And I'm opening my sluice gates.

SUN

Come close. What an exquisite humidity you exude.

RAIN

How penetrating your presence is. I'm numb from it. But your wife, the Moon and her craterous character.

SUN

Ecchh. She's in hiding to make me think she's brand new each time she shows up. And this Médard?

RAIN

Médard, what a name! Is he ever ludicrous!

SUN

Closer, dear Rain. You know, between you and me, I'm delighted by this meeting.

RAIN

Closer yet, handsome sphere. I don't feel anything anymore. My consuming one.

RAIN AND SUN (simultaneously facing each other)

Birth to our orgasm and bend it into seven colors.

ANGEL (getting up briskly)

Thunder. I was just about to bollocks up the miracle! (he bounds to the projector and turns the handle) Full steam ahead. Fire. (and the remarkable rainbow appears . . . multi-colored infinity.) Once again the proverbial cretins'll pretend that there's a wedding between

Heaven and Hell going on and they'll have a great village fair in the lowlands!

PETRONELLA'S VOICE (heart-rending)

Father John, I'm fainting.

VOICE OF FATHER (tremulous)

I'm going into ecstasy oh Petronella.

STRONG VOICE FALLING OUT OF THE ZENITH

Angels of all degrees, come see the rainbow!

APOTHEOSIS

CURTAIN

APPENDIX A

HAMLET'S GRIEF

A Dialogue by Michel de Ghelderode

1932

Translated by David Willinger

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Characters¹

Hamlet

Gravedigger

¹A cast list was omitted from the French edition (Trans.).

(In a suburban graveyard at twilight. HAMLET enters. The GRAVEDIGGER interrupts his work.)

HAMLET - Are you the Gravedigger?

GRAVEDIGGER - Yes Sir, at your service.

HAMLET - You'll serve me later, the later the better. Like all those with a taste for the macabre, I cling to existence unto infinity. You dig holes and you fill them up again, don't you?

GRAVEDIGGER - Human beings fill them up. I help them to do it with a bit of earth, carefully leveling off the ground afterwards.

HAMLET - Yours is a smart trade.

GRAVEDIGGER - They say that there is no stupid job, Sir.

HAMLET - Really! (He reflects.) What do you think of death!

GRAVEDIGGER - What do you want me to think of it, since I don't usually think. Death gives me a living.

HAMLET - Getting back to this common place, I'd say that life makes me die! The one's as commonplace as the other one. As common as this common grave. (He laughs.) I'm cheerful, Gravedigger.

GRAVEDIGGER - I don't give a hoot about it, Sir. I'm a regular audience to the different faces of the living and the dead, the living who cry, and the dead who laugh.

HAMLET - Are there really dead who laugh?

GRAVEDIGGER - Yes, a special laugh, but a silent one. Look at this skull at your feet. He's laughing.

HAMLET - So, because he shows his teeth that means he's laughing. Go and eat roots and clay. (He kicks the skull aside with his foot.) Do you have anything else to tell me, Gravedigger?

GRAVEDIGGER - Nothing sir, living as I do inside these four walls of nothingness. The dead don't come back, you know that. And if they did come back, would anyone believe in them?

HAMLET - Phut! Don't say that. There is my father's official ghost. (Perplexed.) Yet some of the dead should come back, if only to show their teeth and disdainfully go off again. (Somber.) Gravedigger, when the time comes for you to bear my elegant cadaver to a rosewood coffin, how will you go about it?

GRAVEDIGGER - With all the respect due to people in your condition, I'll cover you carefully with a thick covering of earth. Time will do the rest.

HAMLET - The earth will eat me up. The earth'll absorb me. That is beyond doubt. The old globe is a stomach always filled with the meat of men and the meat of women. It digests bones with the same gusto as coffin lids. Funny, really. Gravedigger, what if the globe suddenly spit everything up that it had swallowed so gluttonously since the time society hopped onto its spherical face?

GRAVEDIGGER - You've got a funny frame of mind, Sir. No one ever puts such questions to me. Let's be serious. Did you come to pay me a sympathy visit?

HAMLET - One of propriety. Did you bury a young woman yesterday?

GRAVEDIGGER - Right here. Between a counterbass and a midwife.

HAMLET - How far down?

GRAVEDIGGER - Two meters fifty.

HAMLET (doubled over) - Oh my love, you're two meters fifty down. That's really just a bit, but what an abyss! Gravedigger, lay this yellow plaster crown on her grave. Thank you. What do you think of the inscription in black lettering, "Eternal regrets?"

GRAVEDIGGER - That's the best one, Sir, provided that it's followed by a question mark. Let's look around for some others. Read these epitaphs "We'll join each other in Heaven."

HAMLET - Nothing could be less certain.

GRAVEDIGGER - Or this one here: "The earth is hiding you, but my heart sees you forever."

HAMLET - Or that one there, of my making:

"Ophelia,
Too lovely,
It was going to be forever."

. . . . and I conclude:

I will love you virgin and rot

GRAVEDIGGER - Just like jokes, the best epitaphs are the shortest. You've just got to prefer "Eternal regrets."

HAMLET - It has the ring of "Sincere condolences." I'm grief stricken, Gravedigger, even if it doesn't show. This young woman drowned. Here's a tip. Don't thank me. When gravediggers don't get a tip they take it out on the corpses. They open up the coffins and steal the jewelry. If the corpse is a fairly pretty woman, they rape her. In this way certain husbands or fiances get posthumous horns. Gravedigger, I'm not saying it's the case with you. You're closemouthed, which I like well enough. You've modeled yourself after the dead, with your sallow coloring, your outlook, and your apathy. Listen to me. I'm Hamlet, Prince of a foul-smelling a domain as the one over which you rule. (A silence.) Answer me: Does it ever happen that one of the dead, half-dead, leaves its death trance behind and reclaims the air and light to which it's entitled, by striking hard against its covering?

GRAVEDIGGER - It's been seen, my Lord, it's been seen. And when such an event takes place, it's never mentioned, in order to avoid family complications.

HAMLET - Yes, but Ophelia was too well brought up to do that. She died, and beautifully. But the doubt. The doubt with which the buried are rewarded. (He sighs.) What an idiot I'd look like if my beloved saw my "Eternal regrets."! (Decided.) Gravedigger, if she were to come back, she'd have to be treated with consideration, and tell her that Lord Hamlet was eaten up with grief, that he's traveling in order to forget his grief . . . and that he's quite shocked, that he wasn't expecting to see his poor Ophelia die, so come back to life . . . in order to die afresh. For those who're dug up don't last very long, isn't that so?

GRAVEDIGGER - No, my Lord, they don't persist.

HAMLET - All is well. What are you staring at so far away, on the graveyard wall?

GRAVEDIGGER - That blackbird?

HAMLET - It has comical ways.

GRAVEDIGGER - And it talks. A crow or a jay, he entertains me often.

HAMLET - An intelligent animal who wants to imitate men. What does he say?

GRAVEDIGGER - Sincere condolences.

HAMLET (laughs heartily) - Ho, ho, ho! (Serious.) Adieu, Gravedigger, my chatter is getting on your nerves. Say no.

GRAVEDIGGER - Yes My Lord.

HAMLET - Adieu, Ophelia. Be wise. And above all, no visions. There're enough ghosts already.

He leaves. The gravedigger shrugs his shoulders and picks up his spade again.

APPENDIX A

ADRIAN AND JUSEMINA

An Entertainment after an Ancient Tapestry

by Michel de Ghelderode

1933

Translated by David Willinger

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CHARACTERS

ADRIAN, The Shepherd
JUSEMINA, The Shepherdess
EGLON, The Young Archer
FLUORESQUE, The Comet
CORNEBELLINE, The Unicorn
ASTONIFANTASIUS, The Peacock

DECOR

The decor is foliage and rock in what seems to be a corner of a dilapidated and somewhat decayed old park. Some enormous roses, also decayed, ringing a sundial. A sign, "Birds forbidden from singing." Where this place actually is, I don't know, but it does exist.

SCENE I

EGLON, the young archer, enters, carrying bow and arrows. He is ruddy, skinny in his tunic which is cut too short. His voice cracks. An embroidered heart over his own heart. This adolescent evidently finds himself without game and in a foul mood.

EGLON - Who will hear my lament? I make it over and over, changing the words around so it'll be perfect sooner or later. Will you hear it; I am quite satisfied. Have you got the proverbial ears, old wall? And birds, they're other parts of the glade's scheme. Insects, beetles and brightly polished ladybugs, will you come? The rich echo, too, Croesus, who was in a rococo grotto in rock coco.

Enter Astonifantasius, the peacock.

ASTONIFANTASIUS - Eglon, I could be it if I'm the only one. I'll spread my tail and you'll be broiled alive at the sight of this blaze of feathers.

EGLON - Too bad for you that you get nothing but jeers for your display! No, your show would only succeed in revealing your foul behind, and the beautifully harmonious countryside would find itself all in discord from it. The sky is a flawless indigo, Pea-o-cock, and you, you're the animal who brings on rain. Come back when you put your gray linen outfit on.

ASTONIFANTASIUS - Adieu, I have a great personality, Mister Love.

EGLON - A great opinion of yourself, fabled but not so fabulous bird. Your train of a hundred feathers is nothing but a dust sweep. And what if I shot a dart into your great personality, Mister Pea-o-cock?

Astonifantasius leaves in a hurry.

SCENE II

EGLON (with several sighs) - Alone then? No cuckoo nor white spider, not even a little rabbit? Peculiar garden to assign me as my domain. (He comes toward the public. With the gauche gestures of a scholar lecturing, he recites:) The lament of the young archer. (A bored silence.) When I had just been born, all blood sausage pink, they wanted to dress me up like a young angel, with puffed up cheeks for blowing bubbles, and milk soup. Understand that I lived my life naked, with a star in my navel. They didn't know if we angels were boys or girls! (He blushes.) They did know it, but the angelicos bawled out:

We are the innocents
 Who are born every morning
 And when the sky is gleaming
 In the currant bushes we're sleeping.

What did they do to me? They hung me in a wreath of little angels embellishing an azure oval of a great tableau and told us: "Move no more; you're painted." I got dizzy and fell into a beautiful scene of the Assumption and from there right into the paint pots.

He laughs. The Unicorn comes forward a few steps.

SCENE III

CORNEBELLINE - He could use a lyre. At your age all youths speak a pompous lingo and have acne.

EGLON - Cornebelline - you grumble and pine away; your horn is chipped and it's lost its sheen; I pardon you. Unicorns aren't in demand anymore; they're out of style.

CORNEBELLINE - I used to be graceful, a woven animal, one paw raised, forehead inclined, and my coat shone with a silver light. Elves stuck pomegranates on my point. And here I am, an old allegorical nag, made obsolete by this skewer impaled in me.

EGLON - May I say something? Be attentive, Unicorn Cornebelline, to the following complaint of the young archer. We've had quite enough of your stylus.

CORNEBELLINE - I want to pulverize some cut lilies under my hooves.

She leaves, completely vexed.

SCENE IV

EGLON - Having originally come from the Orient, she hasn't yet adjusted to Dutch pastures. Keep fretting, young archer, until you get some pleasure out of it. (He resumes his stance of the declaiming scholar.) The complaint of the young archer continued, "What became of me." They entrusted me to another master who didn't paint for churches, only for drawing rooms. You don't have a nice little angel face, he'd declare, you've got a head of love. "I'm attaching wings to you and I'm arming you with a forged bow and these dangerous little arrows that you'll shoot without reflection." I pierced doves for practice, oh cruelty. Then little girls' bosoms to see the thousand diamonds that shot out of

their eyes. Then, one night, out of malice, I wounded my master with a premeditated arrow. He became so balefully amorous that he lost his reason and was ruined. Little love so useless, I used to wander through the gardens of nordic Arcadias, freezing quite often, and taking aim at snow sculptures. I wanted to enlist myself in a company of archers who had never finished martyring kind Saint Sebastian. They'll take me to the village fair to take aim at the popinjay. Since the time I started roaming, love's sprouted a seed. My tunic is becoming too short and if I grow again, they'll soon find out that I'm a boy. I want to cry. (He bows.) Here ends the complaint of the young archer.

SCENE V

The Comet, Fluoresque, appears in her veils, wanders, searching and turning around in place.

FLUORESQUE - I'm lost. The dew is engulfing me. My blazing head will turn into a calcified rock if it rains; my tail, a skein of string in the absorbent meadow.

EGLON - Comet, so lovely in your fretting, tell me your story?

FLUORESQUE - I will tell all, spiritual child, but don't look at me, trying to get through my veils with that shining eye of yours. I'm scatterbrained, since I'm a young comet with none of the wisdom of the annual migrators. I had to carry out my mission in the skies of I don't know which capital of I've forgotten which kingdom where something might've been going on, a mission for the purpose of proclaiming I don't know what anymore; the last sigh of a monarch or the plummet of a minister. Having confused red lights with green lights, I arrived at the summit of the kingdom after the event had been duly completed, and astrologers and political newsmongers laughed, as you can well imagine. This is the first time I'm out in the world. Ashamed and not daring to go back to the cometodrome, I went all round, nowhere, without lifting-off power or the least sense of direction. I'll get it back on a gust of contrary wind. So I wound up in this park, where I'll dry up, a good-for-nothing, made out of perishable material. From here on in I'm homeless.

EGLON - Why don't you post yourself at the vine growers' zenith? You know, those dancers with juicy feet who worship comets?

FLUORESQUE - Don't talk to me about those evil men who spill the blood of vines into the river without squeezing enough riches out of them. No, young archer, shoot an arrow into the rose of my heart.

EGLON - It's just that you're so intangible.

FLUORESQUE - If you're not going to kill me, what can you do for me?

EGLON - Come deep into the park. You're warm; I'll refresh you. I'll perfume you, dear odorless one, and I'll sprinkle flowers all over you, dear colorless one.

FLUORESQUE - Oh really, all that and then?

EGLON - I'll entertain you, for I am bored. We'll go to the city, and perhaps patrons will find a position for you in the rose section of a stained glass window.

FLUORESQUE - And then?

EGLON - We'll play the games afforded by our age. I'm called Eglon.

FLUORESQUE - My name is Fluoresque.

They leave, already intertwined. A silence and Cornebelline returns.

SCENE VI

CORNEBELLINE - Those garden ornaments, the peacocks, don't even know how to laugh. This need to make an appearance, to call themselves nobility, when they really hail from the farmyard. The bird displays beautiful feathers, yes; but let them open their beaks and such brassy commonness. What an aria! No, I won't stoop to fraternize with this nasty bird with a Turkish carpet attached to its rear end.

The unicorn leaves. Astonifantasius soon makes his entrance.

ASTONIFANTASIUS - Bless you, yes, I'm bursting because of this! This mule believes anything is permitted her just because she's got a swordfish on her frontispiece. She comes to me: "My dear Leon." Imagine! I'm called Astonifantasius, that's to say, astonishing fantasy, and my authors date back to the story of Renard. This Cornebelline, on the other hand, comes right out of an omnegang and has no parchment except her skin, which isn't even as good for stretching on a drum as an ignoramus' is. I no longer feel so faint.

He leaves, invested with a comic dignity.

SCENE VII

A pause. Enter Adrian, a young and handsome man, covered in a black cape down to his feet. He holds a lamb under his arms. A flute hangs from his shoulder. He walks slowly, describing a circle around the ruin.

ADRIAN - I am Adrian, which is a pseudonym. I'm a shepherd, which is a mere pastime for one of my class. Re-reading Virgil, Horace doesn't fill up an entire existence, nor sheep shearing, nor does cheese making. There're always the stars to contemplate, a dazzling spectacle, but fatiguing for the neck, and then there are the flute melodies with seven intervals; do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, pastorals, my sheep always moan pastorals (sigh) Being a shepherd is so much fun in the French ballets. Ah, the fine years spent in my father's palace! Why, venerable Papa, did you want to make your son into a theologian with a square cap and robe under the pretext of glorifying our house? I was born for inlaid weapons, horsemanship, horticulture, and chamber music, don't you know? I have a great fondness for tric-trac, sleigh riding, art collections, navigation. My ultimate ambition was to be a warrior with a mass of leisure time, time in the service of Mars, of Venus, and the muses. Lamb, mourn for me.

He presses the belly of the lamb who goes: Ba-a-a. Adrian has disappeared behind the ruin. Enter Jusemina, covered with a long white mantle, carrying a sheep and a crook. Gracious young woman with a proud carriage.

SCENE VIII

JUSEMINA - Strawberries and honey, that's my food, milk my beverage. I can tell the Great Bear from the small, tell the wind direction, by moistening my finger, groom the sheep with a curling iron. That's all that's expected from a shepherdess like me, and rather this suffocating sheepfold than the frozen alcove of the old fogey financier with whom my parents had matched my good fortune, exclamation point, and their patrician conceit. The nights are thrilling, filled with the terror of wolves. No more dancing the pavane, singing about the rood screen, decorating wax puppets, trimming poodles, mixing perfumes, sleeping on the seesaw, ferret hunting, undressing myself in front of a triple mirror. Nature is delicious from May to September. The fairies are bound with leather. I have been very wise to become a priestess. Or even a wife, what with the young turning into old fogeys so fast; as they say love is fatal to old men. Summer's drawing to an end, alas; snow is going to fall, and an ogre will come to eat me up with the rising hoarfrost, leaving only my poor ocelots which they'll carry on a tray to my parents, who'll say: It's well done, there, she's punished! Lamb, mourn for me.

She presses the belly of the lamb, who bleats. She disappears behind the ruin, as Adrian reappears, still walking around.

SCENE IX

ADRIAN - Heavy burden; my solitude, must I tell you over and over that I'm not made of wood as hermits are? The only remedy in the neighborhood I see for it is Jusemina, a young shepherdess, beautiful and alluring; the hitch, my station, which her position as a shepherdess cannot match. Happily, Eros, who roves through these parts, is either of a peaceful temperament, or a bad marksman. I would gladly love this Jusemina, actually I've almost fallen in love with her. I'd love her for the season if she'd like me to. The sheep would be better kept if I did, and the hours less long. Let us not persist. She ignores me and goes to great lengths to show it.

He has disappeared behind the ruin. Jusemina returns.

SCENE X

JUSEMINA - And I sigh as anyone else would breathe, night and day, and twice as much at night. Solitude could be light and velvety to me if I were experiencing love or something like that. Who is there to love I ask? In the neighborhood there's only this too handsome shepherd whose flute tunes show his indifference. All the same, I could love him, but observe how I detest him. I couldn't love him even if he were shimmering like a god, because of the misalliance.

She moves around the ruin. Adrian appears.

ADRIAN - Guess whether I'm going to pay court by some clever imposture, in order to divert myself. That woman's a comet flying, incomprehensible, highly illusory, and you could get burnt by it. Will I find her, this distracted one?

He stops at the front of the stage. Jusemina comes in.

JUSEMINA - I'm tired of doing without excitement; I'm talking myself into falling in love with Eglon, that idle guy; who's at the dumb age. I'll comb out his red hair and soften his angles. I'll wound the little aggressor voluptuously by tending his wound without healing it.

Adrian and Jusemina finally meet.

ADRIAN - The shepherdess conceives a boundless scorn.

JUSEMINA - The shepherd gulps jealousy through the mouthpiece of his flute.

They freeze and scrutinize each other rudely.

ADRIAN - 'Od's blood, if it isn't the shipherdess. And your shep, my beauta, are they yieldin' a profit to ya?

JUSEMINA - A problem, they are, shipherd. My eye, they go ba-ah so stupidly.

ADRIAN - As a master, so her subjects. You know I'm marrying that tailed star.

JUSEMINA - Damn! I'm marrying Eglon, the virgin.

ADRIAN - Not flesh, not fish; so young that he wants to suck on you.

JUSEMINA - And your lovely comet's really caught on fire.

ADRIAN - Go graze on the green!

JUSEMINA - Go munch the grass! Ba-a-a!

ADRIAN - Ba-a-a!

They turn their backs on each other as the sound of running echoes.
Enter Cornebelline.

SCENE XI

CORBELLINE - I saw them, ohahehoheha, how ridiculous they are! Odd, what silliness love inspires. Let's hide and eavesdrop on them.

Astonifantasius appears in his turn.

ASTONIFANTASIUS - That's it, ahihohehoha, on this very spot. We of zoology, we have so few distractions. This quaint interlude will save us from spying on her calcinated snail's tricks, losing his heart to the salad saladine.

They hide on the forestage, one to the right, the other to the left. Adrian and Jusemina go take up their positions behind the ruin after these exclamations.

ADRIAN - My comet?

JUSEMINA - My archer?

Eglon and Fluoresque enter intertwined. They interrupt their slow march to burble.

EGLON - I who thought you intangible! You're burning and you're chilly. Your vaporous flesh changes color with every kiss I give you.

He kisses her. Fluoresque, who was purple, turns pale yellow under the lighting.

FLUORESQUE - I'm steam on the mirrors. Let your lips blow and my flame revives. Keep kissing me and I'll give off sparks. Come up to the hill where the slate-blue air will fill up my veils.

They are gone. Soon the peacock snorts and the unicorn paws the ground.

ASTONIFANTASIUS - This comet is perverse! And how she sets this simpleton archer giggling with her coloring kisses! I know these colors, by god! Let's follow them; the moment is coming for them when they'll be so silly they won't be able to distinguish one shade from another any more.

CORNEBELLINE - If they ever marry each other, the planets will come to the wedding. How about it, Sir Peacock, what practical joke shall we play on them? What if you let loose one of those squawks with the torrential results?

They set out on the track of the lovers.

SCENE XII

Their faces livid, Adrian and Jusemina come out of their hiding places.

JUSEMINA - I'm betrayed! Pour forth, my tears; my eyes are inexhaustable springs.

ADRIAN - Rending bitterness. I'm going to murder the infidel.

(With a gesture he throws off his cape to grab the poignard that's hanging from his belt. Everyone sees, and Jusemina, too, sees that he is dressed in embroidered clothes. Adrian rushes off in pursuit of the lovers.)

JUSEMINA - Shepherd, abandon your impulse to kill. Shepherd, have I ever spoken to this gentleman before? Since when do sheep keepers dress so and carry embossed weapons? What falsehood, Adrian? Who are you that you don't want anyone at all to know? And I who love Pour forth my tears, my eyes are prodigious fountains!

Running coming back; Astonifantasius reenters in hilarity.

ASTONIFANTASIUS - So, so, so, so, so! Don't open my hand for the little bird flies away and the illusion sails off.

Cornebelline enters in the same way.

CORNEBELLINE - Here's how the knots of tenderness are untied.

Jusemina goes in front of the unicorn, opens her mantle, which concealed more garments woven with gold threads, and begs:

JUSEMINA - I want to die. Unicorn, lower your horn, stab me and kindly pierce my heart?

CORNEBELLINE - Pardon me, my lovely, I hate blood.

ASTONIFANTASIUS - Come, she's been reading stories.

The two animals leave.

JUSEMINA - In that case, I will utter great tragic sobs which will darken Nature.

She throws her mantle up at the sun, lets it drop, and does as she said she would. Nature doesn't darken. Adrian returns.

ADRIAN - I won't pursue her to these heights; thus passion makes a murderer of me, by not giving me of the power of a flying man. (Consternation at discovering Jusemina in her festive clothes.) Where I left a modest shepherdess, I find a lady of quality in beaded silks and laces. What is this comedy of changing costumes? (He helps Jusemina to get up.) Miss, I can't bear to see you lying on this coarse mantle. By what charm has a certain Jusemina, shepherdess of the sheepfold, been metamorphosed into a young woman in evening dress?

JUSEMINA - The same, my lord, which made shepherd Adrian into the well-born lord who is taking pity on my fate.

ADRIAN - What distress of the soul has brought you to dress yourself so?

JUSEMINA - None at first, except a change of humor; since the punishment took place.

ADRIAN - Eglon is well punished.

JUSEMINA - As if Eglon were the problem.

ADRIAN - Who else could be the problem, since there is only this shepherd around?

JUSEMINA - He has disappeared. Here's his black cape. Since he's gone, I'll swear: I loved him, my lord.

ADRIAN - Well I, I love a shepherdess. Here's her white mantle. Adieu shepherdess.

He gathers up the white mantle and kisses it.

JUSEMINA - Adieu shepherd.

She gathers up the black cape and kisses it.

SCENE XIII

Eglon pops up and mimes a vehement despair.

EGLON - The sneak, she took me up the hill, saying: Let's go roll down the slope all wound up together; it seems like a primitive game and it's a shrewd method for feeling good. . . . Yes, but! During her run, the wind happens to whip around the hill many times, using it as an axis, she finally gathers force and bounds resiliently on the plain. My comet, running and frolicing, suddenly climbed the wind and, sticking her tongue at me, sprang across the space. Can you see it? She hovered, almost invisible and absorbed, like foam. I want to shoot her down!

ADRIAN - Quite mad is the one who pursues that which flees!

JUSEMINA - To love a fixed star, try again, but a star errant. . . .

EGLON - My lord, my lady, in my anger I respectfully ask you to mind your own business. If you annoy me, I'll shoot arrows at you, and you'll be afflicted with the gravest illness ever to hit the human race: Me, love.

ADRIAN - Keep your sticks, young friend. I am already touched.

JUSEMINA - Same for me, the sublime poison is coursing through my body. (Eglon starts to cry.) Contain your grief. For a lost comet. . . .

EGLON - Don't speak to me about her! These loves merely served to keep me busy and free from boredom.

ADRIAN - Do you want to become a shepherd? I give you a flock and the flute.

JUSEMINA - A flock and the crook. A white mantle for the night as well.

ADRIAN - And a black one for the day.

EGLON - I do. And what about the shepherd, the shepherdess from around here?

JUSEMINA - They have other tasks.

EGLON - Yes, a thousand pleasures that I could name, and when they are over, we'll start in again. Go, it's as old as Eden!

ADRIAN - Adieu, ancient love!

JUSEMINA - We will not leave this domain.

Adrian and Jusemina leave, intertwined.

XIVth AND LAST SCENE

EGLON - Bah. . . . I'm dressing up as a shepherd. (He covers himself with the black cape, spreads the white mantle on the sun dial, and sits upon it. He puts the two sheep in front of him and tries the flute.) I have an ear for music. Let's solemnly celebrate the frankness of sheep and the quality of their wool. (He looks at the sky. The comet is seen passing by, tiny.) Fly, fly, I never loved you, my long-haired one. Fly and go crack your head on giant Jupiter, and break into bits, thing of glass. That's my wish.

Cornebelline and Astonifantasius come in.

ASTONIFANTASIUS - We've made a pact. This charming unicorn.

CORNEBELLINE - The peacock is magnificent. Amity was sworn between us.

EGLON - Dance, sentimental animals! Such an azure prevailing and amidst such flowers, in the earthly garden men and animals need not have a single care!

He plays an elegiac tune on the flute by Cavalier Gluck. The peacock and the unicorn dance majestically.

Curtain

APPENDIX A

OSTEND MASKERS

A Pantomime by Michel de Ghelderode

1934

Translated by David Willinger

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This pantomime, or rather, this plastic projection inspired by the Ostend carnival and suggested by certain of Ensor's canvases constitutes an attempt at rehabilitating a forgotten and unjustifiably disregarded genre. Dramatists no longer think very much of mimes, considering them inferior artists, even though exceptional poets of the Theatre assign them a rank in the hierarchy higher than the verbal comedian, the degenerate mime. And why not attempt this resurrection of the mime at a time when more than ever, the Stage is only a setting for distracted holding forth because they can't enliven it and people it? We are certain that the pantomime will no longer find popular acclamation, because the mime is a refined form of art; however, we hope that it will again meet with the appreciation of young comedians who love the theatre for itself, for its own sake. It would make as much sense as the study of the fugue or geometry in other areas.

AMBIANCE

In Ostend (in Flanders), on the evening of a rainy March carnival, in a nook of a greasy city, already smelling of Spring. The pantomime is played in a basement, close to ground floor level, as they are in the old port. In back, the weathered wall, stained in spots. The wall has openings; to the left, the door opens onto the street; to the right, a dormer window, at eye level. At the center of the set, solemn and burgeoning, the stove from which a bent pipe extends, vanishing in the gathered half-light up by the ceiling; near this pipe, a veteran chair and a white chamber pot lying on the bare floor. Finally, to complete the picture, a brown armoire with a coffee pot, overhung by a picture depicting a sail ship. The amber light with reddish highlights makes a triangular sweep from above by a huge lamp hooked in the middle of the ceiling. Modest, yet quite hot, this light emphasizes the stove and the chair, bathing the rest of the room in a chiaroscuro suitable to the birth of the fantastic and the burlesque.

MIMES

THE VERMIN - Quadregenarian fisherman on a binge, lit up with gin. Ocher and black, lumpy, thick like varnish, visor on his ear, his body is propelled by a bizarre sailor's motion. This gait isn't that of just any drunkard, but very specifically that of a drunken fisherman of Ostend.

NYMPH OF THE FOUNTAINS - Apparition under the sway of an exotic aesthetic. Large girl, in pink-washed tights, appealing, relatively graceful figure with a Mona Lisa smile found in parade floats. A siren embellishes her swollen belly; a heart on her right buttock, an anchor on her left. Sketchy dancing occasionally; she'll be quivering in transparent veils on which black and silver dolphins and starfish are stitched.

THE THREE HARRIDANS - Old fishwives. Lots of petticoats, dark shawls, white bonnets. They have ugly and garishly painted masks with moustaches, missing teeth and warts. But underneath this cardboard and this getup, the roles are played by tastefully made-up young ladies.

DEATH - Gaunt, flaccid, feeble. Long, cheap and dirty linen cloth with bloodstained crucifixes on her back. Crushable top hat. The classic mask with elongated jaw. She holds a broom.

THE DEVIL - Small, fat, in jacket and cocked hat, topped off with tail and horns. He wears a trident with a fish at the end. His mask, like his outfit, is scarlet, but his trousers are white and his socks are green.

THE PECULIAR MASKS - Diverse extras, in the Ensorian manner.

PANTOMINE

Before anything begins, the curtain still closed: music of the popular taste, to which is added blaring from an obnoxious trumpet and tolling of a bell. Voices come near, accompanied by whistling. This ruckus builds and stops; abrupt stop. The curtain opens. The stage remains empty. A voice whines quite nearby, piteously. Flute comes in over it. Laughs and shouts nearby: Thwa-ack! Far away different carnival tunes clash. The door opens. No one. Finally, someone

THE VERMIN - He enters backwards. He pitches to the left, then to the right, sideways, his false nose in erection. And makes a complete turn in place. Facing the street, he laboriously traces some steps of a

leaden dance. But a passerby appears at the door suddenly, a surprised mask. A spurt of flour and confetti makes the Vermin recoil. The door bangs. And the Vermin is left bewildered, arms dangling.

He slowly turns around. He scans the surroundings, incommensurately stunned. He sways for a moment. A hiccup. He regurgitates some liquid from his snout. Caw! He rubs his lip, massages his stomach. He is sick. He lifts his arms once or twice, as if about to dance. Too sick, no question.

He heads toward the stove, caresses its sides with clumsy hands, grabbing, you might say, his last heat with which he smears his forehead as though it were a balm. Then he sits, numb. His glance falls on the chamber pot, and a slight second glance indicates that he has recognized the object. He takes hold of this vase, makes the motion of drinking from it, spits into it. An internal laugh shakes his shoulders. He gets rid of the chamber pot with disgust; he'll puke later.

The music starts up again outside, erupting and rolling further away. This cacaphony annoys the Vermin. He lifts his hand toward the door as if to smack the street and everything that passes along it. "Let me be, I'm fed up to my balls with your carnival!" He tears off his cap and casts it away. He grabs his head. He yawns several times. And he falls asleep, as though he'd been knocked out, curled up at the base of the stove.

But on the street - breaking glass, a dog barks, a woman cries: "Help!" Nasty laughing. And the Vermin is aroused! He gets up in a flash and his fists quiver. Will he throw himself into a fray? No, his backside getting heavy, he falls down into his chair. New hand motion toward the stove. The heat is having an effect, and the Vermin goes back to sleep, all wilted. Right away two curious masks appear at the dormer window frame. The Vermin's doze interests them enormously. They nod and rub each others' noses. The two masks withdraw, but they reappear at the door which they just violently pushed open, life-sized and unleashed. They emit strident shrieks and bombard the sleeper with rotten fruit. And scamper off.

Fallen backwards, the Vermin scuttles like a crab on the ground. He gets up again, lurching. Ready to fight back, he charges toward the door. He leaps into the street and comes back, fit to be tied. He shuts the door. He whimpers with rage and sniffles tears. He swings around the stove, discomfited, and sits down backwards onto his rear end. His head in his arms, he goes back to sleep a third time. His back soon expands hugely, indicating a deep sleep.

The lighting becomes bluish and misty, as if the room were enveloped by a luminous mist. This mist is indubitably emanating from the Vermin himself, who has entered an involved dream. And some languorous music infuses this fog, very soothing. The Vermin's body takes up the music's cadence. And the Nymph of the Fountains appears, seeming to emerge

from the wall. The Vermin has arisen. All his gestures are free and easy, since he's dreaming. He discovers the apparition. His happy surprise, his rapture! He smiles. The Nymph smiles. And the Vermin backs up, performing elaborate bows, one hand over his heart.

The Nymph lets herself fall in with the music and starts to dance on her toes, roughing out classic phrases. The Vermin remains in ecstasy. He throws kisses. Rendered amorous by this scene, he approaches the Nymph with greedy paws. The girl says: "Down paws." Pursuit around the stove. The mocking Nymph frustrates the Vermin's none too confident erotic designs. She invites him to dance from a distance. The man hazards some burlesque steps. Joy from the Nymph. The Vermin throws himself onto his knees and begs love from the thrilling apparition. But the Nymph of Fountains very quickly seizes the chamber pot and crowns the suppliant with it. She leaps like a gazelle and disappears the way she came, absorbed into the wall.

Standing, the Vermin disengages the chamber pot from his head. Will he lose his temper again? No, he hitches up his shoulder and makes a derisory gesture toward the wall. Then, in an offhand way, turns his chair, spits toward the wall for the benefit of the evaporated Nymph, and resumes his sleeping posture. The dream lighting has dissolved. The seductive music has ceased, leaving a heavy silence in its place. Sudden thunder clap of the bass drums, tamborines, accordions, and jingling jonny. The sleeper gesticulates and gets up. He blinks his eyes, clears out his ears, practically awake this time. He yawns, rubs his forehead, and breathes the air as if to recapture the Nymph's perfume, acknowledging by disabused gestures that he has been the victim of delusions. But the music which is going on outside, a real tidal wave, dispels his incipient heroism. The Vermin shakes himself and thrusts out his torso. He grabs a bottle from the armoire, empty alas, this bottle! He counts his money, meager, alas, his money! He pulls his cap back to the nape of his neck, making up his mind to face the carnival afresh, glues his elbows to his body, and aggressively breaks into a march around the room, as though he were following the music which is continuing outside. Then he makes a sudden charge for the door; he leaves.

At this very moment, the door opens. The Vermin draws back, stunned. The three Harridans enter, holding each others' hands. They turn and leap about the man who attempts to break the chain. He mocks their masks, holds his nose, expresses his disgust. The three shrews wish to be kissed. He pushes each and every one of them away. Consequently, the three Harridans become indignant and, after gathering their strength, they lash out all together against the ingrate and beat him with their bouquets and umbrellas. The besieged Vermin laughs till he cries, lets it go on and, seated on the floor, sways in place and smacks his legs. The old ladies draw away from him and have a rapid and mysterious conference between them. As the music redoubles outside the Harridans take advantage of this reprise to launch into a dance of the graces,

quite orderly at first, but which soon gets faster and more peculiar, by changing into the most witch-like dancing. With obscene gestures, they contort their legs and lift them high. The Vermin has stopped laughing. He's gotten onto his knees. Swinging their hips and lifting themselves up like marionettes, the dancers tuck their frightful skirts up more and more, showing their charms beneath fine lingerie and cascades of lace, displaying perfect thighs. Breathless from this spectacle, the Vermin gets up, trembling all over. He tries to throw himself on the women. They draw back. And the satyr is sprawled out. The Harridans strip off their masks and reveal fresh faces of pretty young Ostend maidens. The satyr grows dizzy before this revelation. He tries to throw himself on them once more, ready to jostle the false old ladies, but the Fishwives have already replaced their masks and are rushing out onto the street, shrilly laughing like goats. And the tide of music outside carries them off.

Disconsolate, the Vermin is left looking stupid. His hands stretch out toward the prey of innocent flesh again. And for what! He goes to shut the door and returns infinitely unhappy at having had a brush with love without having been able to grab it. He pulls off his false nose and casts it away. And he sets to braying. Is there any doubt that these are a drunkard's tears? Then he stops to contemplate the emptiness.

Some other music starts up in the neighborhood; it fatefully breaks into a kind of funeral march. The Vermin listens to this march which impresses him. He goes to sit, chin in hand. He touches the stove, lackluster and cold. And the Vermin raises the collar of his jacket. He listens, approving the music drifting in. He vaguely traces a sign of the cross in front of him, lets his bust drop in front of him, opens his mouth, crosses his hands, stretches out his legs - the posture of a completely stiff corpse. Now the choir of undertakers starts up. In a flash, the Vermin gets up, quite determined. He takes the clay pipe from his pocket and breaks it in two. He throws the remains far away and laughs sinisterly, baring his teeth.

Curious masks come to the window pane, observing what's going on inside. And what do they see? The Vermin opens up a piece of furniture, taking out a rope, a hammer and a clamp. He looks around at the ceiling, at the walls, the place. He makes an artistic slip knot, expert and complicated, a strong sailor's knot. Then he listens to the silence in the room, relative silence since the bands are moving through the neighborhood, but quiet enough for him to hear his true heart beating calmly. Then he acts. He puts the chair against the wall, climbs up on it, turns the clamp in the same rhythm as the funeral march, throws the hammer, puts the rope around his neck, sways a little, looks up, down, to the left, to the right, hesitating. . . . He takes out his red handkerchief with which he covers his eyes. Finally, he spreads his arms and bends his knees three times like a diver taking off. . . . The curious masks have seen enough. They disperse.

They're doubtless alerting people on the outside. Some calls and whistles. A big hubbub. The door is forced open.

The Vermin, seized by terror, tears the bandage from his eyes. Death is standing in the doorway, Death, beckoning him with a finger. Then Death comes forward with great dignity, her old broom over her shoulder. She orders the Vermin to get down. The Vermin frees his neck and jumps down from the chair; he falls onto his knees. And Death, in the heat of a fury, taps the suicide candidate with swats of the broom. Varied masks cram themselves in before the door and swarm like painted rodents. They appreciate the thrashing Death is inflicting on the Vermin. The funeral march is replaced by jolly music, and it is to the rhythm of this fanfare that Death applies her rhythmic broom swats.

The partner Devil starts to enter, shoved inside by the masks. At this moment the Vermin attempts to escape and avoid Death's broom, but he falls onto the Devil's trident. New terror. Devil and Death torment him and throw him down, to the delight of the masks. To escape from the torments, the Vermin falls flat on his face, feigning a faint.

Death and the Devil jump up and down and congratulate each other. They strip off their masks, uncovering the pickled and drunken figures of carnival rascals. They are gleeful. Death shows off a cloth bag which he shakes, making a tinkle of money. The Devil draws out a bottle, glug-glugs, and passes the rum to Death, who glug-glugs in his turn.

These two familiar sounds have drawn the Vermin out of his faint. He recognizes his friends. Amazement! A crazy laugh runs through him. He twists about on the floor. His two friends set him upright. The Vermin hugs and caresses them. Death shakes the pouch under his nose; the Devil makes him drink. The Vermin sketches a dance. He has recovered his energy, his taste for life! He wants a mask. His two friends make mysterious signs at him. The Vermin is intrigued.

The Devil takes his own mask out of his straw shirt, which he passes to the delighted Vermin, while Death, doing likewise, brandishes a magnificent lunar mask, with an angelic expression. The mask is placed over the Vermin's face. This mask is crowned with ostentatious red hair. And so the Vermin finds himself transformed for the better. Death and the Devil put their masks back on.

A voice from a mask yelps in falsetto: Dominus vobiscum. And all the masks in the street respond: Et cum spiritu tuo. The angelic Vermin religiously spreads his arms and blesses every one, masks, Death and Devil.

Popular music bursts out, with rattles and toy whistles, very stirring. The various masks gesticulate and draw back from the door. The Angel of the Carnival, Death and the Devil hold each other around the waist and dance in place, making the floor shake with the soles of their feet. It's a rough sailor dance on the deck of a ship. A cloud of confetti envelops them. And as the whole city acclaims them outside, they leave Indian file, without stopping dancing, making faces at the public as they go.

CURTAIN

1930

APPENDIX A

THE MAGPIE ON THE GIBBET

A Farce after Breughel the Elder by Michel de Ghelderode

1937

Translated by David Willinger

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THE CHARACTERS

(in order of rank)

HERMES DE FONSECA, Prosecutor
 CARLOO, Judge
 HONDEKETTER, Monk
 JODEM, Lawyer
 MENONKEL, Hangman
 SNOECK, Surgeon
 LAMPRIDO, Foot Soldier
 THE SERGENT
 BOER LAM, Peasant
 BOER LOM, Peasant
 FINNE, Peasant Woman
 MUGGE, Peasant Woman
 MANKABENA, Witch
 THE CONDEMNED MAN
 HANNEKE, The Magpie
 A HURDY-GURDY PLAYER

AND THE PLACE

At the time when Breughel wandered around painting, in the sweet country of Brabant, the knave tells us of a golden, luminously alive fine azure morning, at the summit of a hill, where the herb grass grows, studded with little white and yellow flowers. The eye spies an entire valley from this spot, and on the hillside further off, the walls and towers of the good city of Brussels. However, the setting is Justice's dominion and, just so that no one forgets this fact, they set up a gallows and ladder. This gallows is painted pink and has a crosspiece attached to it, which serves as a perch for a haughty looking Magpie. One hears but a few chirps from the birds' dwellings, which are in the nearby thickets, as well as the tunes from a local village fair, emerging at times on the undulations of the breeze. Sticking out of the grass are two feet, which belong to a sleeper whose snoring can be heard.

SCENE I

MANKABENA, the ageless Witch, enters from the right, snorts at the gallows, and gestures to the Magpie.

MANKABENA - Pikke-zwet? Piripi? (The Magpie hops.) What do you see with your left eye?

HANNEKE, the Magpie - Niks.¹

MANKABENA - You are deceived, for (She sings:)

"I have seen the hanging fruit,
On the tree of sin.
It seems the tree has dried up,
And was all shriveled,
From swinging so high in the wind.
Then, a treat for my tooth,
The ripe, soft fruit I ate."

HANNEKE - Bek!²

MANKABENA - No good, hanger?

HANNEKE - Rot!³

MANKABENA - Och, pikke-zwet, I eat death, rot; when I was young, och, I munched on strong young men, live birds I swallowed. That's life, it is. So you don't see anything?

HANNEKE - Niks.⁴

MANKABENA - You're not even a one-eyed Magpie, you're a blind one, so you'll get clean spectacles with colored glass for bait.

HANNEKE - Tof!⁵

MANKABENA - But I've seen the juicy fruit in my song. (She indicates the sun.) And there are some moons really sprouting up. (She sings in her jargon:)

"Strange plant root
Not human, not animal
And even less mineral
Not demon and not angel . . . "

¹As with the Brabant dialect, these brief words in Magpie language don't rate a single sound in response, but do have their meaning. Niks means: nothing.

²Same note. Bek! means disgust.

³Same note. Rot! means: rotten.

⁴Same note as above.

⁵Tof! means understood! or chic!

SCENE II

The grinding of a Hurdy Gurdy close by, accompanying a lively marching song; to which the Witch starts to dance spryly around the two posts of the gibbet. The Magpie hops on its crosspiece. And the snorer, who has awakened in the meantime looks on - dumbfounded - at the leaps of the Witch and the Magpie. He puts on his hat, gets up, staggers a little, and mutters.

LAMPRIDO - Dancing under the gallows, how inadvisable! (He maliciously shoves his halberd into the legs of Mankabena, who falls, crying.) What did I tell you, hmm?

MANKABENA (getting up and punching the Foot Soldier) - Lamprido? Treacherous, underhanded, lustful, vain

LAMPRIDO - Right! These are my titles. Anymore?

MANKABENA - Drunkard!

LAMPRIDO - Me, a drunkard? Take that back!

MANKABENA - I insist that you wouldn't know a bottle if you saw one.

LAMPRIDO - Right!

MANKABENA - Because where there isn't even one, you see two or three of them.

LAMPRIDO - It's my weakness. Now dance. That's enough. You'll have to eat jellied foot pretty soon, and blue hand, and nibble from Adam's side. If I want to hold onto my watch, got that

MANKABENA - Would you happen to be thirsty?

LAMPRIDO - No, I'd love to drink.

MANKABENA - Take this flint. How much is it worth?

She gives it to him.

LAMPRIDO (Taking it.) - An opportune sleep! (He throws his halberd aside and grabs Mankabena by the waist. Short dance to the music which is drawing continually closer; then:) Someone's coming, get out. It's the village fair and holiday time in the hamlet of Saint-Job down there. Soldier of duty, I'll chase you through the meadow of Justice.

MANKABENA (moving away) - Keeper of dirty swine!

LAMPRIDO - Good appetite, Mankabena!

The Witch is gone.

SCENE III

Alone, Lamprido rubs his hands and speaks to Magpie:

LAMPRIDO - Have you caught any news, black feathers?

HANNEKE - Mum!

LAMPRIDO - Then, since I've got to pee and I could no more do such a thing against the gallows than on His Majesty's lawn, or on the clouds, I'm going to do it against Saint Peter's Inn, down our hill - ah! for to pee. And if you notice the procession that's supposed to come by, warn me and make

HANNEKE - Kwak!

LAMPRIDO - Good! Oh, Magpie, whom I will proclaim as careful and watchful as the Inn of Saint Peter's rooster, the animal who crows three times when I come in, just to give the lie to my drunkard's oaths. Cheers!

He walks off with long strides. The Magpie hops, then becomes still, attentive. The music grinds out very close by, and soon, two short and stocky peasant couples enter, preceded by a hunchbacked Hurdy-Gurdy Player. They wear pretty clothes in shades of brown and red and flowered hats. Their faces are shining with butter. Passing under the gallows they jump in place and sing in chorus:

SCENE IV

"Our white bread's sliced today,
And we're going to our fair.
We're honest and free today,
Vine leaves crowning our hair!"

They break off, puffing and laughing, give each other big play whacks.

BOER LAM - Time out on gallows hill! The air's pure here.

BOER LOM - Here you can see things from on high, my cousin. And the procession winding about in the village. I see the verger's nose.

FINNE - My good man, we came here to flirt. Ho! And they used to let you roll from here on down the slope, all wrapped up together.

LOM - Ho! And when you got to the bottom you were married. The priest was hidden in the hedges.

LAM - Shut up! You'd set out for your reward from here. Marriage! I'll say.

MUGGE - You also set out for heaven. The pretty gibbet!

FINNE - How it does us proud! But explain this one to me.

LOM - What?

FINNE - A gallows without hangers? Since when?

LAM - Today, rest. It's the village fair. But wait, you'll see.

LOM - You'll see that no one'll hang again. A new reign brings new customs.

MUGGE - No one'll hang by the neck again, but by the feet. How humiliating for the poor little thieves!

LOM - Tush! Our Prince has proclaimed.

LAM (imitating a drum) - Trum, trum, trummel - jeroom!

LOM - That he wanted the happiness of his subjects, that his reign will be full of kindness.

FINNE - Our happiness? Let us do it ourselves then. Trum trum.

MUGGE - Drink and dance and sing. It's our day! On to Saint-Job!

LOM - Let's admire this gallows once more, for we'll never see it like this again.

FINNE - True, they'll hang fewer.

MUGGE - But they'll hang better.

LAM - Hurrah for the new reign, which'll be a noble reign indeed if they hang everybody who deserves it!

LOM - Beautiful! Hurrah!

MUGGE - Too beautiful! Hurrah!

FINNE - On the way back, you want to bet we'll meet a country bishop who'll make sermons at us.

LAM - We'll listen to his harangue. It's fair time. Come on.

LOM - We'll have swollen tongues like his, but we'll have gotten ours from drinking.

MUGGE - Ours will be swollen from drinking only.

LAM - Let's go cousin!

LOM - To Saint-Job!

The Hurdy Gurdy plays and the bumpkin couple set off, waves of laughter bursting from them, arms raised. Lamprido comes back, takes his hat, turns it upside down in two hands, raises it high to his mouth, and swigs from it greedily.

SCENE V

LAM - Go down deep.

LOM - Bitter brew.

Lamprido, who's finished drinking, squirts a jet of beer towards the peasants and puts his hat away.

LAMPRIDO - Meuh!

MUGGE - Who dares to insult this warrior?

FINNE - The casks will be well defended in war time.

LAMPRIDO - Easy for you to say. You go right to the vat for your drink.

LAM - Coming with us? It's a celebration.

LAMPRIDO - Slave of duty, incorruptible.

FINNE - What are you guarding these days?

LAMPRIDO - Mrs. Gallows.

LOM - Don't touch it; it's just been painted.

LAM - Still damp - a virgin you might say - so you think twice about putting it to use.

LAMPRIDO - Truly.

MUGGE - It's death season for thieves who've been napping through these blessed days.

LAMPRIDO - How about the judges, are they sleeping?

FINNE - The thieves have been gainfully employed at the Council of Finances.

MUGGE - In that case, who'll they hang now?

LAMPRIDO - What do I know, except for the notorious Ulenspiegel who's still got to hang and is waiting in the Steenport prison for them to cut out his last shirt.¹

LOM - Better hurry up, for Ulenspiegel's the kind who'd go walking away totally nude.

LAM - Is the rope that'll strangle him even ready! Long live Mischief!

LOM - Let's drink to his long life.

LAMPRIDO - Here's to the jughead.

MUGGE - Let's get going to the jug.

FINNE - By way of the sunken path!

The peasants pair off and set out, preceded by the Hurdy Gurdy Player who grinds away at his instrument.

LAMPRIDO - Bite the ham down to the bone, it's your day!

PEASANTS (leaving) - Our day! And our night afterwards! And one whole fat week! (They sing:)

"Our white bread's sliced today,
And we're going to our fair."

(The voices fade little by little.)

SCENE VI

LAMPRIDO - How happy they are! Keep it up kind laborers, and have a good laugh, hic.

HANNEKE (imitating Lamprido's hiccup) - Hik!

LAMPRIDO (sermonizes at the bird) - Shut your beak, Hanneke, or open it only for a good reason. If you drank beer, you'd know what "hic" meant. Vigilance, my Magpie! I'm going to sleep for fifteen minutes. Stay awake for now and if you notice someone coming, yell to alert me.

¹Steenport, name of a door to the first surrounding wall of Brussels whose dungeons were famous. This construction still stands, its name literally meaning: Peter's Door.

HANNEKE - Kwak!

LAMPRIDO - Just like that and nothing more.

He yawns, comes downstage, firmly plants his halberd in the ground; then, crossing his hands like a ship's topmast, he immediately falls asleep, his head dangling and his body swaying - but soon becoming so still that he resembles a statue of Discipline. Lamprido sleeps standing up, stiff and abstract like the gallows. He'll sleep for a long time in this way. The breeze brings up a resonant blast: Bagpipes, fifes, the vinegar thread of accordions, a peeling of bells, and to top it off, intermittent singing. But, this entire rustic polyphony is driven back by a murmur coming from the opposite direction: Rude voices and the bellowing of a liturgical chant. The Magpie sets to beating its wings.

HANNEKE - Kwak! (Lamprido doesn't move.) Kwak! Kwak! (Lamprido, frozen, remains deaf to the alarm. The Magpie insists.) Kwak! Kwak! Kwak!

(She freezes for a long time. She, too.)

SCENE VII

Three characters enter from the left, two laymen and an ecclesiast.

HONDEKETTER - Enough of that song! What a crucifix!

SNOECK - Poor us! But on the other hand, what a superb lookout point! Brabant looks like the Alps.

JODEM - Have you ever seen the Alps?

SNOECK - Never, except in painting. When our countryman, Breughel, paints a scene of Brabant, he puts the Alps in the back, from which I deduce

HONDEKETTER - Is he the one who painted the gallows? If he did, he's a good craftsman.

JODEM - Marvelous, the gallows! How pink! Appetizing.

HONDEKETTER - Kiss it dear lawyer, it'll respond to your fervor.

SNOECK - Did we come here to joke around?

HONDEKETTER - Are we supposed to cry beneath this magisterial light when the whole country is joyous?

SNOECK - I concede that it is pleasant to be alive.

JODEM - Could it be any other way in a country where the gallows are pink?

SNOECK - A country in which you can find pink Alps!

HONDEKETTER - Quick, look: The Prosecutor arguing with the Judge.

(All three turn around. Two other characters enter.)

SCENE VIII

JODEM - Calm yourselves, Gentlemen, save your haggling for dull days.

CARLOO - We were having a discussion.

JODEM - In order to decide?

HERMES - If it isn't time for the Brotherhood of Maybug Hunters to go to war.

CARLOO (spotting Lamprido) - This soldier, who, it seems, is the terror of maybugs, will tell us about it. His exploits in the Brotherhood are his sole claim to fame.

HERMES - Don't distract this slave of Duty. To work!

JODEM - With all due respect, doesn't our Prosecutor want us to have a rest? This heat

HERMES - We so wish. (He sits - all the others follow.) I would gladly build a little white castle on this hill. What a panorama!

SNOECK - Set against the forest of Cares, swarming with wild game.

HONDEKETTER - At the foot, the spotless Senne Valley, where the Little Island brewers make such strong beer.

CARLOO - You're making me thirsty, little monk. If only we were down there, amongst the festive villagers!

HERMES - We'll go to the fair after our labors. Nothing affects me the way brave people rejoicing does.

JODEM - The ones down there believe as firmly as gallows wood that a new rule has already begun; would they be having such a good time otherwise?

HERMES - It has, they aren't wrong. Fortunately, things change according to the gracious mood of our Sovereign.

CARLOO - Our salaries go up.

SNOECK - The gallows are colorfully painted.

HONDEKETTER - It no longer rains on festival days.

JODEM - And the Prosecutor conducts his justice with his ass in the flowering weeds. (General laughter.) I propose a little nap.

CARLOO - Not a bad idea. (He lies down.)

SNOECK - The sleep of Justice, preceded by the sleep of the just, us. (He lies down.)

HERMES - Who'll wake us up? (He lies down.)

HONDEKETTER - I won't sleep. While lying on my back, I'll just contemplate the turquoise blue sky which we're going to inhabit in some far-off time. (He lies down.)

(A silence.)

SCENE IX

After a long pause, gamboling spryly in spite of his rotundity, the one they call Menonkel enters, bursting in his scarlet clothes. He circles the gallows in pursuit of a flying insect, and makes great swipes at the air with his hood.

MENONKEL - Here! Got it! Nope! Big beast! Come on! (In his run, he stumbles and falls on the sleepers. Shouts and tumult. All get up and Menonkel, the first to do so, resumes his chase.) Give me a hand? There, see it! Buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz! (The characters follow Menonkel's example and join the race, leaping into the air, running into each other, spinning around, all the while emitting various exclamations. This carousel accelerates, and finally Menonkel exclaims:) The maybug is caught!

(All gather 'round.)

ALL - Victory! Honor! Maybug was flying; maybug's caught!

HERMES - Was I right or wasn't I, Carloo? We're right in the middle of maybug time. Witness!

ALL - Buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz!

JODEM - And the custom, children of Brussels? Let's summon the sparrows ritually!

ALL (calling into the blue) - Tss? Tss? Tss?

JODEM - The solemn moment of the maybug's liberation! Make way!

(Menonkel opens his hands and all shout.)

CHORUS - Maybug, fly, fly, fly!

HANNEKE (with a snap of her beak) - Knap!

(Applause and laughing.)

MEN (ecstatic) - Maybug was scrunched! Bravo, Magpie!

HERMES - Bravo! And now? (Silence falls.) Hangman, where's your client?

MENONKEL - On the other side of the meadow. Hey!

HERMES - I'm afraid he left him to chase the maybug.

MENONKEL (exits, running out left) - Halt!

JODEM - Down there, in the shrubbery. He's hiding in back of it.

(He dashes off, following the hangman.)

HONDEKETTER (rushing headlong) - The scoundrel!

SNOECK (following the monk) - Buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz!

(One hears the ferocious shouts of the pursuers.)

SCENE X

CARLOO - This isn't so funny, we'll have to hang too.

HERMES - Watch that lawyer run. The idea that the condemned could escape the punishment gives him wings.

CARLOO - Make him a judge. By God! They've got him. I can breathe.

HERMES - For a rogue to escape us is common, and we rejoice each time it happens. But here's the scoundrel!

CARLOO - Alas, why have we permitted the military to go, so now we have to walk without escort?

HERMES - Because they raised the magistrates' salaries, comrade!

CARLOO - As for me, I like that, but some day they'll ask us to hang ourselves. (Snatches of loud conversation. Addressing those who are coming back:) Hurry up!

SCENE XI

Snoeck, Jodem, and Hondeketter reenter, encircling and shoving along a skinny little man with a shock of red hair, dressed in a long white shirt. The little man, all shaking and wild-eyed, has a frightened face, though a perpetual smile goes along with it, whose lip movement warns us when he's about to speak.

JODEM - Will you believe me, my lords? The scamp wasn't making an escape at all; he was innocently picking daisies.

SNOECK - He doesn't seem to be very aware of his situation.

HERMES - By our decree, we've made him drink the wine of mercy. It wasn't so long ago that convicts didn't even get such quality to save them from the anguish and impact of death. Since our Sovereign has ordered that Justice be humanized, we decided that all condemned to the death penalty will receive his goblet of surprise.

HONDEKETTER - Surprise doesn't catch it; beatitude will be the word! I've tasted it from your merciful vine.

CARLOO - Even though the fulfillment of Justice is diminished by it, the result seems honest. The convict stays peacefully, no grimace and no shout, and he'll pass on with dignity.

HERMES - So, the contagious kindness of our Sovereign rushes over us like a waterfall. Don't we make an excellent assemblage of people! What do you think of it Ulenspiegel? (The condemned rolls his vacant eyes.) Nothing; he's dreaming. He hasn't seen the gallows, can't tell the difference between colors anymore; where he sees pink, death in pink!

JODEM - That's progress.

SCENE XII

Menonkel returns, carrying a stepladder and a rope with a noose, the rope being gold.

MENONKEL - Here's the scabel and the strop! He puts the stepladder under the gallows and seats the condemned man.

CARLOO - Ulenspiegel, observe the respect of which you are the object. We offer you a seat and a respite long enough for one good breather before dying.

THE CONVICT - Thanks! But

HERMES - Ulenspiegel, notice that we're leading you to the punishment on a splendid day and in an enviable spot, at the height of the village fair, whereas before, because of your unworthiness, you would have been shamefully strangled at the Horse Market on a dingy morning, subjected to the jeers of the populace of Marolles.¹

CONVICT - Thanks! But

JODEM - Ulenspiegel, observe that if I haven't been able to obtain a pardon for your overly rambunctious personality, I have made sure that you were led to death in a new shirt, and that the wood of justice was given a fresh coat of paint.

CONVICT - Thanks! But

HONDEKETTER - Ulenspiegel, my dear soul, how right you are to utter thanks. Thanks to Good God and to our magnificent Sovereign! Know that criminals of other times weren't always assured of receiving confession and supreme comforts. And when they did obtain the sacramental consolations, it took the cross and the banner to convince a cleric to agree that they accompany his eternal soul. Now, notice how I've kept you company, I who was ordained and who opened that little door in Heaven up for you, through the power of my prayers.

CONVICT - Thanks! But

¹ Name of a very old quarter of the city, which has always been, up to the present day, an area reserved for the populace and constituted, in bygone ages, a sort of republic or Court of Miracles.

MENONKEL - Ulenspiegel, notice that the strop, that's the technical term for the rope, has been painted gold, that I will slip it over you like the Golden Fleece, with the respect due to the Unlucky. Moreover, the Magistrate has bought me these fresh clothes and these dogskin gloves, for your pleasure. You will be most correctly hung and unhung just the same.

CONVICT - Thanks! But

SNOECK - Ulenspiegel, notice that your body, quite rightly, won't be lying there, torn to bits, food for the ravenous crows. I've obtained permission to cut it up so that the art of anatomy will profit by it.

CONVICT - Thanks! But

HERMES - But what? Isn't that enough?

CONVICT - It's too good, but

CARLOO - No, it isn't too good. We will do better in the future with the hope that, Justice becoming humanized, killers and thieves will have benefited from this procedure, and treat their victims less severely, if not exactly with tenderness.

HERMES - A very moral policy! (Emphatic) Associates, certainly we can speechify on the subject, and we do rejoice, principally, at the softening of our benevolent Laws. Rest assured, we're still under the influence of the Joyous Entrance, and we won't tire of being the sons of Brabant for a long time to come, open to being totally compassionate. You see me ready to pour tears forth at the destiny of this guilty Ulenspiegel who we'll have to hang quite shortly. The aforesaid Ulenspiegel noticing, in short, that he is dying fittingly and free from fetters.

JODEM (To the Convict) This confers the right on you, poor mortal, to gesticulate and harangue, although a certain brevity, under the circumstances, is not without grandeur.

CARLOO (To the Convict) - And after your confessions, as you obstinately repeat

CONVICT - Thanks! But

HERMES - No buts about it! Nor objections, nor scruples; come to your senses, repent, and learn that the sentence is duly warranted. Proceed, our Judge, and read it out to us.

CARLOO (Unrolling a certificate) - There are one hundred and seventy-seven counts against this one individual.

HERMES - Just read off the first few for form's sake.

CARLOO (Reading quickly) - He named Till Ulenspiegel, notorious wrongdoer, who claims his profession to be that of dog salesman, is convicted of having broken into and emptied the collection boxes of the Church of the Chapel, and of scandalously proclaiming that what was good enough for feeding the hypocrites was good enough for feeding the tax collectors; is convicted of having composed and circulated a document in verse in which he claimed that our illustrious and very high Sovereign was syphilitic and full of diseases, and that his decay wouldn't fail to poison the whole country; is convicted. . . . (He interrupts himself.) My heart's sinking. I think that's enough.

JODEM (To the Convict) - Do you wish to hear more of it?

CONVICT - Pardon, but

JODEM - He asks pardon!

HONDEKETTER - You have it, my son! (He kisses him.) You're as immaculate as your shirt. To Heaven! See, he's crying!

SNOECK - But no, he's laughing!

CARLOO - Is he crying or laughing?

HONDEKETTER - Both at once.

HERMES - Let us profit from this pathetic tendency. Menonkel, do you hear me? Hangen!¹

SEVERAL OTHERS - Hangen! Let him be hanged!

(The Hangman is getting ready. Jodem gives him a shove.)

JODEM - Let's delay. I see a Magpie on the gallows. The gallows is for the Convict and not for the Magpie. Someone get rid of it!

HERMES - We acknowledge that your role is to uphold the course of Justice; all the same, the bird isn't annoying. I repeat the order: Hangen!

SEVERAL OTHERS - Hangen!

JODEM - Alert for a delay. My client is going to speak. He has a right to.

¹Hangen: In Brabant dialect, order to hang. It's a translation of: Let's hang!

CARLOO - Let him speak, protest, implore, beseech, admonish, do satirical songs, blaspheme - it is legal process! In lieu of the populace to listen to him there are the wind, clouds, trees, birds, echoes, nymphs and satyrs. Silence!

(Jodem helps the Convict to get up; the man lurches and makes sleep-walking movements. His lips move:)

CONVICT - It's too beautiful but

JODEM - But what? Spit it out.

CONVICT - I I am

JODEM - Moved?

HONDEKETTER - Enlightened?

CARLOO - Understanding?

CONVICT - Yes All that! It's too beautiful but

JODEM - This man is troubled. He's going to make a solemn revelation.

CONVICT - Yes! Listen I I am

(And all at once, he collapses on the grass like a marionette. They stand him up straight and attempt to reseat him, but the condemned man slides through their hands, inert.)

HERMES - He has spoken! Hangen!

SNOECK - Permit me to practice my art?

HERMES - Later, my good Surgeon. Hangman, climb up the ladder!

SNOECK - Hangman, don't climb up!

MENONKEL - To hang or not to hang?

HERMES - Hang!

SNOECK - Not!

CARLOO - And why, if you please?

SNOECK - Because this man is dead.

ALL - Dead?

(They bend over the Convict.)

HONDEKETTER - Gloria! His soul is flying toward the sky! Buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz This is inspiring.

HERMES (Exploding) - It's absurd. Our Justice isn't getting its due share out of it.

CARLOO - And the Convict, for whom we've prepared this marvelous hanging, is he getting his share? Here he is, being deprived of his pleasure!

JODEM - The penal verdict is being consummated naturally.

SNOECK - I claim the body.

CARLOO - Okay. And see how badly this trickster died.

SNOECK - Of a surfeit of joy, no doubt.

JODEM - Such an end makes you wish for the good fortune of the next one!

HERMES - Truce! Into the common grave with the corpse. Let the Hangman and the Surgeon perform their bleak duty.

A VOICE - Hey-ho, hey on gallows hill.

(All go out toward the left.)

SCENE XIII

HONDEKETTER - Is someone calling us?

CARLOO - The Sargeant of the Steenport.

(The Sargeant enters, out of breath, and holding out an envelope.)

HERMES - Still more requisitions? Give it here. (He reads.)
"My Lord Prosecutor, Prudence is the cardinal virtue. Look twice before hanging a Christian. So, if you haven't hooked Ulenspiegel by the neck yet, go no further, but return this unfortunate to his state as an irreproachable free man."

JODEM - Your Justice

HERMES - We see our Justice disastrously thwarted, my comrades! The letter I'm reading is signed by Tyl Ulenspiegel, himself. We were going to hang an innocent. That's the truth!

CARLOO - Awful! But this convict who's lying there?

HERMES - If I understand, this one here would be an inoffensive drunkard named Voske Doublebasin, who, never sobered up after the Joyous Entrance of our Prince and was jailed in the Steenport, waiting, since the Amigo was over-booked.¹

JODEM - Does this explain anything?

HERMES - Then the jailers who were all drunk, sent him to ferment in the cell of that rogue, who cut his beard and exchanged his execution shirt for the one he had on. The fox is on the run! Tell the rest, Hangman.

MENONKEL - The condemned man, whom they pointed out to me, had just been delivered when he called to me and I poured him the wine of mercy, which he drank like a connoisseur. I hadn't even known this man; he only made murmured objections. He seemed resigned, apparently.

HERMES - But you, his judge, my Lord Carloo, and you, his judge, my Lord Jodem? What made you think this convict was the authentic guilty party?

CARLOO - The office was very dark during the trial; let them give us a proper house of Justice. Judging by candlelight, is that right in our age?

JODEM - As for me, I had some doubt, but I believed this metamorphosis to come from the effects of the wine or from the jitters.

HERMES - Ah! How frail our jurisprudence is! Are we going to improve it by painting the gallows pink and the rope gold?

JODEM - One word; this Ulenspiegel is more deserving of a salute to his particular genius than I to mine.

HERMES - We've already figured that out. Let's leave.

(They leave by the left in a flurry - followed by the Sargeant Menonkel rests the stepladder on the dead man's belly and grabs him by the shoulders; Snoeck lifts him by the feet. And the two leave with their burden. The voices fade. The music is again heard from the village fair. Approaching, the Hurdy Gurdy resounds, accompanied by the Chorus.)

¹Amigo: Nickname of the ordinary prison where the City locks up drunks, liars, or petty offenders.

SCENE XIV

The Magpie flaps its wings, for coming into view, leaping, riding a broomstick is a sorcerer, Mankabena. She parades around the gallows and shakes her fists at those who've departed.

MANKABENA - Toveri! Tovera! They've stolen my criminal from me. I saw it from my hiding place; they've taken my hanger! Pustules and tumors for you, stink bugs to you, mucous and scabs! (Catching a glimpse of Lamprido, who's sleeping still.) And for you, you gaper, a billy goat kick in your flat ass! (Head lowered, she hurls herself down on Lamprido and butts him. The disturbed sleeper is sprawled on his back, crying from fear. While Mankabena leaves, hurling her curse:) Toveri! Tovera!

SCENE XV

LAMPRIDO - Tovera! Toveri! At me? It's the devil, Balbuc, who screwed me down. Where's help? All the devils in Brabant are attacking me!

(Explosion of voices. Peasant men and women enter, while the distressed soldier pulls himself together.)

PEASANT MEN AND PEASANT WOMEN (all at once) - No, the devils are at the fair! Devils are happy, drunk! Who screamed? A criminal being tortured? No, Lamprido! Stung by a viper? No! Possessed! Long live Lamprido! He's in a trance! Saint Itantick, pray for him.¹

LAMPRIDO - Shut up churls! I was conscientiously awake when a horrible beast knocked my pins down.

LAM - You were dreaming, that's obvious.

LOM - Finish your watch, come drinking.

FINNE - So? Haven't you hanged anyone?

LAMPRIDO - Trap without meat, the gallows is fasting.

MUGGE - They'll never hang anyone again! Hurrah! The Prince promised.

¹ Saint Itantick: Imaginary saint whom the people irreverently invoke for those afflicted with the shakes, ridiculous nerve attacks, and visible jitters.

LOM - We're alive! Hurrah!

LAM - Brothers and sisters, what do you do under a gallows when nothing's hanging and the pouch is full?

LAMPRIDO (Laughing) - Well then, dance!

(The peasants laugh copiously. The Hurdy Gurdy player starts to grind. The two couples get in place and do a rough dance, Lamprido dancing by himself. The dancers embellish their frolics with grimaces and bows to the gallows. Then they move off to the music, preceded by the musician and followed by Lamprido. They sing:

CHORUS - "Our white bread's sliced today,
 We've come back from our fair.
 Our cod-pieces are stinging just now,
 And our heads are really on fire."

(The chorus fades out. All silence soon reigns. Then, the solitude of the place being re-established, the Magpie hops on her perch. Black spots in the yellowing sky. She clucks, and seems to take part in the universal joy. Then she agreeably exclaims:

HANNEKE - It's too beautiful!

(And the curtain falls, the farce being over.)

APPENDIX B

Chronology of the Short One-Act Plays¹

Date:	Short One-Act Plays:	Longer Plays:
1920	<u>Piet Bouteille</u>	
1923	<u>The Old Men</u>	
1924	<u>Blockheads</u>	
	<u>La Mystère de la Passion de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ</u>	
1925	<u>La Tentation de Saint-Antoine</u>	<u>La Farce de la Mort qui faillit trépasser</u>
1926	<u>The Massacre of the Innocents</u>	<u>The Death of Doctor Faust</u>
	<u>Venus</u>	<u>Don Juan</u>
	<u>The Public Life of Pantagleize</u>	
1927	<u>Escorial</u>	<u>Christopher Columbus</u>
	<u>Transfiguration in the Circus</u>	
1928	<u>A Night of Pity</u>	
	<u>Dreams Drowning</u>	
	<u>Three Actors and their Drama</u>	<u>Barabbas</u>
1929		<u>Pantagleize</u>
1930	<u>Caroline's Household</u>	<u>Le Sommeil de Raison</u>
1931	<u>The Liar's Club</u>	<u>Red Magic</u>
	<u>Duvelor</u>	

¹The above are dates of publication.

1932	<u>La Grand tentation de Sainte-Antoine</u>	
	<u>The Strange Rider</u>	
	<u>Rainbow</u>	
	<u>Hamlet's Grief</u>	
1933	<u>The Blind Men</u>	<u>Sortie de l'acteur</u>
	<u>The Women at the Tomb</u>	<u>Le Siège d'Ostende</u>
	<u>Adrian and Jusemina</u>	
1934	<u>Ostend Maskers</u>	<u>Lord Halewyn</u>
		<u>La Balade du Grand Macabre</u>
1935		<u>Miss Jairus</u>
1936		<u>D'un diable qui prêcha merveilles</u>
		<u>La Farce des Ténébreux</u>
		<u>Hop Signor</u>
1937	<u>The Magpie on the Gibbet</u>	<u>The Chronicles of Hell</u>
1942		<u>School for Buffoons</u>
1952		<u>Marie la Misérable</u>

APPENDIX C

CHARTS OF ENTRANCE-EXIT PATTERNS

A=Snow Ball Pattern

B=Jack-in-the-Box Pattern

PIET BOUTEILLE (PATTERN A)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Mille	Mille	Mille	Mille	Mille	Mille	Mille
Beloke	Beloke	Beloke	Beloke	Beloke	Beloke	Beloke
Madeleine	Madeleine	Madeleine	Madeleine	Madeleine	Madeleine	Madeleine
	Piet	Piet	Piet	Piet	Piet	Piet
		Jef		Spinnekop	Spinnekop	Spinnekop
					Betteke	Betteke
						Smots
VIII	IX					
Mille	Madeleine					
Beloke	Piet					
Madeleine	Jef					
Piet						
Spinnekop						
Betteke						
Smots						
Jef						
Bonifacius						

THE MAGPIE ON THE GIBBET (PATTERN A)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Hanneke	Hanneke Mankabena	Hanneke Mankabena Mankabena	Hanneke Lamprido	Hanneke Boer Lam Boer Lom Finne Mugge	Hanneke Boer Lam Boer Lom Finne Mugge Lamprido	Hanneke Lamprido
VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV
Hanneke Hondeketter Snoeck Jodem Carloo Hermes	Hanneke Hondeketter Snoeck Jodem Carloo Hermes Menonkel	Hanneke Hondeketter Snoeck Jodem Carloo Hermes Menonkel Prisoner	Hanneke Hondeketter Snoeck Jodem Carloo Hermes Menonkel Prisoner (dead) Seargent	Hanneke Mankabena	Hanneke Boer Lam Boer Lom Finne Mugge	Hanneke

THE LIAR'S CLUB (PATTERN A)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Luna	Luna St. George	Luna St. George Sir Edward	Luna St. George Sir Edward Thomass	Luna St. George Sir Edward Thomass John	Luna St. George Sir Edward Thomass John Samuel	Luna St. George Sir Edward Thomass Samuel
VIII	IX	X	XI			
Luna St. George Sir Edward Samuel	Luna St. George Samuel	Luna St. George	Luna			

THE WOMEN AT THE TOMB (PATTERN A)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Midwife Layer-Out	Midwife Layer-Out Magdalene	Midwife Layer-Out Magdalene Mary Margaret	Midwife Layer-Out Magdalene Mary Margaret Veronica	Midwife Layer-Out Magdalene Mary Margaret Veronica Cured Woman	Midwife Layer-Out Magdalene Mary Margaret Veronica Cured Women Woman Taken	Midwife Layer-Out Magdalene Mary Margaret Veronica Cured Woman Woman Taken Pilate's Wife
VIII	IX	X				
Midwife Layer-Out Magdalene Mary Margaret Veronica Cured Woman Woman Taken Pilate's Wife Mary John	Midwife Layer-Out Magdalene Mary Margaret Veronica Cured Woman Woman Taken Pilate's Wife Mary John Jochabeth	John Mary				

OSTEND MASKERS (PATTERN B)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Empty Stage	Vermin	Vermin Nymph	Vermin	Vermin Harridans	Vermin	Vermin Death Devil
VIII						
Empty Stage						

THE PUBLIC LIFE OF PANTAGLEIZE (PATTERN B)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Pantagleize City Guard	Pantagleize	Pantagleize Forensic P.	Pantangleize	Pantagleize Politicians	Pantagleize	Pantagleize Aunt Jujube
VIII						
City Guard						

DUVELOR (PATTERN B)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Duvelor Melanie	Duvelor Lepisser	Duvelor	Duvelor Lepisser Capuchin	Duvelor Lepisser	Duvelor Capuchin	Duvelor
VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV
Duvelor Melanie	Duvelor	Duvelor Melanie Intended	Duvelor	Duvelor Judge	Duvelor	Duvelor Lucifer
XV	XVI	XVII	XVIII	XIX		
Duvelor Confessor	Duvelor	Duvelor Monks	Duvelor Monks Devils	Empty Stage		

DREAMS DROWNING (PATTERN B)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Diver Dealer	Octopus Diver	Octopus Diver Atlanta	Octopus Diver Atlanta Explorer	Octopus Diver King Monk	Octopus Diver Monk	Octopus Diver Monk Sea Beggar
VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	
Octopus Diver Sea Beggar	Octopus Diver Sea Beggar Pirate	Octopus Diver Sea Beggar Pirate Siren	Octopus Diver Sea Beggar Siren	Octopus Diver Actress Aviator Sailor	Dealer Diver	

TRANSFIGURATION IN THE CIRCUS (COMBINATION AND REPEATED A)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Manager	Manager Mister Clown	Mister Clown	Mister Clown Babylas Dudule Casimir Piccolo August	Mister Clown	Mister Clown Luna	Babylas
VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV
Babylas Piccolo	Babylas Piccolo Dudule	Babylas Piccolo Dudule Casimir	Babylas Piccolo Dudule Casimir August	Babylas Piccolo Dudule Casimir August Mister Clown	Babylas Piccolo Dudule Casimir August	Babylas Piccolo Dudule Casimir
XV	XVI	XVII	XVIII			
Babylas Piccolo Dudule Casimir August	Babylas Piccolo Dudule Casimir August Mister Clown Manager Luna Policeman	Babylas Piccolo Dudule Casimir August Mister Clown	Manager Luna			

A NIGHT OF PITY (COMBINATION PATTERNS)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Bacchus Soldier	Bacchus	Bacchus Showman	Bacchus	Bacchus Soldier	Bacchus Soldier Woman	Bacchus Soldier Woman Showman
VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV
Bacchus Soldier Woman	Bacchus Soldier Woman Showman	Bacchus Soldier Woman Showman Masks	Bacchus Soldier Woman Showman Masks Death	Bacchus Soldier Showman	Bacchus Soldier	Bacchus

RAINBOW (COMBINATION PATTERNS)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Angel	Angel Father John	Angel	Angel Rain	Angel	Angel Petronelle	Angel Sun
VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	
Angel	Angel Colors	Angel	Father John Petronelle	Rain Sun	Rain Sun Angel Colors Father John Petronelle	

CAROLINE'S HOUSEHOLD (COMBINATION PATTERNS)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Borax Pamela Suskanel Spiridon	Borax Pamela Suskanel Spiridon Joseph	Borax Pamela Suskanel Spiridon	Pamela Suskanel Spiridon	Pamela	Pamela Suskanel	Pamela
VII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV
Pamela Spiridon	Pamela	Columbine Pierrot Harlequin	Columbine Pierrot Harlequin Pamela	Columbine Pierrot Harlequin Pamela Suskanel	Columbine Pierrot Harlequin Pamela Suskanel Spiridon	Columbine Pierrot Harlequin Pamela Suskanel Spiridon Borax
XV	XVI	XVII	XVIII	XIX	XX	
Columbine Pierrot Harlequin Pamela Suskanel Spiridon	Columbine Pierrot Harlequin	Columbine Pierrot Harlequin Borax	Columbine Pierrot Harlequin Borax Policeman	Columbine Pierrot Harlequin	Empty Stage	

ADRIAN AND JUSEMINA (COMBINATION PATTERNS)

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Eglon	Eglon Astonifant.	Eglon	Eglon Cornebelline	Eglon	Eglon Fluoresque	Cornebelline
VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV
Astonifant	Adrian	Jusemina	Adrian	Jusemina	Adrian Jusemina	Adrian Jusemina Cornebelline Astonifant
XV	XVI	XVII	XVIII	XIX	XX	XXI
Eglon	Astonifant.	Jusemina Adrian	Jusemina	Jusemina Astonifant.	Jusemina Astonifant. Cornebelline	Jusemina
XXII	XXIII	XXIV	XXV			
Jusemina Adrian	Jusemina Adrian Eglon	Eglon	Eglon Astonifant. Cornebelline			

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